PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993–94

COMPRISING PERIOD
18 July—21 July 1994

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18 July 1994

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 247**

FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 18 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Underground

1. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what current proposals his Department has to extend the London underground system into south London and beyond.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): Primary responsibility for developing the underground network rests with London Underground Ltd. A substantial part of the Jubilee line extension currently under construction runs south of the river and London Underground has plans for a southern extension of the east London line.

Mr. Dowd: I thank the Minister for that response. I realise that London Underground Ltd. will be the primary body involved in any work. I welcome the extension of the Jubilee line and the docklands light railway, but does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that they do no more than touch the periphery of south-east London? We need a major extension through south-east London and on to Bromley and/or Croydon. The commercial, social and, in these days, environmental case for that is overwhelming.

Will the hon. Gentleman's Department do all that it can to encourage London Underground to undertake detailed feasibility and preparatory work to determine what the options might be? We need an end to the present unsatisfactory situation in which almost 2 million people in south-east London are denied access to the most important strategic transport network in the capital.

Mr. Norris: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a study is currently under way, involving the five south London boroughs and London Underground, of precisely the problem to which he has referred. I accept what he says about the absence of a tube line in that area of south London, not least because I live there and am acutely aware of it. We rely on buses and on Network SouthEast, but there is no doubt that the tube would be a great addition.

As I think the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, a tube line would be an extraordinarily expensive proposition, so it would not be reasonable of me to suggest that there might be an immediate prospect of a transport improvement of that sort being delivered. As I said, however, work is being done on examining the feasibility and the benefits to which the hon. Gentleman referred and I will keep a careful watch over that.

Mr. Evennett: Although I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on proposals to improve public transport in south-east London, may I urge him not to forget the needs of the motorist and the travelling public who want to travel by car? The east London river crossing must be part of any overall improvement in south-east London. Although people living in Erith, Crayford, Bexley and other such areas want an improvement in public transport, they also need more crossing points on the river so that they can use their cars.

Mr. Norris: One of the improvements south of the river is £800 million-worth of new Networker trains on the Kent link line, which benefit my hon. Friend's constituents and others in that area. His comment about the need for more river crossings is well understood; however, he knows that many of the proposals for crossings have encountered difficulties, not least with local authorities such as his local authority in Bexley. For example, the proposal for a road

from the A13 through to the A2016 was not only specifically precluded from the original Oxleas wood public inquiry, but would—as my hon. Friend's local authority has pointed out—cause concern about localised traffic, not least in the Bexley area.

Mr. Keith Hill: On the subject of improvements to underground services south of the river, is the Minister aware that members of the all-party Northern line group recently visited the ABB and GEC Alsthom factories at Derby and Preston, both of which are champing at the bit to supply new rolling stock for the Northern line—as, I am sure, are their overseas competitors?

Will the hon. Gentleman reassure the House that the summer recess will be used as an opportunity not for delay but for the speediest possible consideration and favourable conclusion to that urgently needed improvement to the Northern line, both north and south of the river?

Mr. Norris: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's conversion to the private finance initiative and his enthusiasm for its delivery to a safe conclusion. Although it is not for me or my right hon. Friend to show any preference at this stage for those who are competing to supply the Northern line trains, we follow the matter with interest and will certainly ensure that time is not lost unnecessarily.

Motorways

2. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the environmental benefits resulting from the tolling of motorways.

14. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the environmental benefits of the tolling of motorways.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): Motorway tolling will provide another source of finance for improving the motorway network, helping to avoid the congestion and associated environmental problems that would otherwise come with economic growth and increasing traffic. It will also enable more efficient use to be made of the network, for example, by pricing to spread peak-period congestion.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply, but motorway noise will still be high. Is he aware that the houses of my constituents in Long Eaton and Sawley are a bare 20 ft from the edge of the M1, with only a garden fence between them and the traffic? In such circumstances, does he agree that effective sound barriers are needed, whether or not the motorway is widened, so that my constituents can again hear themselves speak in their gardens?

Mr. MacGregor: The effective way of dealing with that problem is to take measures when the motorway is widened. My hon. Friend will know that a preview of the public consultation for widening between junctions 25 and 18 is taking place today and in the coming weeks. I believe that my hon. Friend has been able to discuss all those matters on site with representatives of the Highways Agency. I can tell her that the agency expects mitigation measures, which will come with the widening, to reduce the noise significantly, and they will include contouring the adjoining land, putting up fencing and the other measures to which she refers.

Mr. Spring: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the extra revenue raised from tolls can be used to improve motorways, thus diverting money to help keep traffic off minor roads? Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that, in rural Suffolk constituencies such as mine, where there is great concern about excessive traffic in our historic villages, the environmental advantages of that are fully recognised?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is certainly right that that will be one benefit of motorway tolling; it will enable additional finance to be found for the widening of motorways. That will enable us to avoid some of the environmental disadvantages that will accompany increasing traffic if traffic increasingly goes off the motorways and on to historic towns and villages or other villages and towns nearby. So there is definitely an environmental benefit to be had from motorway tolling—in addition, of course, to the benefits of reducing congestion and its costs.

Mr. Bennett: But what estimate does the Minister have of the number of people who will not be willing to pay the tolls and will divert on to existing roads instead? Is not he already aware that some people seem reluctant to pay tolls on some of the river crossings and are already putting extra burdens on existing roads? Is not this a crazy policy?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the consultation document on motorway tolling, which was published last year, he will see that that was addressed fully in a chapter of its own. The point is, first, that it is important to keep the motorway tolls at a reasonable level to avoid the danger of local diversion but, secondly, that if we do not widen the motorways, diversion to local roads is likely to be much greater because of congestion on those motorways.

Ms Eagle: But does not the Secretary of State realise that, if he imposes a tax on using motorways, people will seek to avoid it by diverting on to other roads? All that he is doing is creating even more problems for drivers and public transport policy. Surely, what he should do is to instigate proper public transport policy and persuade people to move away from using the car.

Mr. MacGregor: We are currently spending very substantial sums on public transport. Investment is at a record level. The hon. Lady must recognise that it would not be possible to duplicate with a public transport system all the many thousands of journeys with different sources and different destination points that are undertaken each day on the motorway. That would be physically impossible. It is therefore important to improve the motorways to avoid the very dangers that she foresees of diversion on to local roads which will arise if the motorways are not effective.

Passengers Charter

3. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on Network SouthEast rail services in relation to passengers charter standards.

11. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on Network SouthEast rail services in relation to passengers charter standards.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to say that, on average over the year ending 24 June 1994, 14 of the 15 south-east commuter routes met or exceeded their passengers charter standards for punctuality and 12 met or exceeded their standards for reliability.

Mr. Waterson: But does my right hon. Friend agree that it makes complete nonsense of attempts by management and staff to improve rail services and to benefit from increased investment in the railway system when the whole system can be brought to a halt by a small group of workers harking back to the bad old days of excessive trade union power?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that the strike does not help with improvements for passengers—or, indeed, for all customers, including freight customers—on the railways, for the very reason that my hon. Friend gives. If there are damaging and unnecessary strikes, they frighten traffic off the railway which may not come back. Such strikes can only be at the expense of investment in the railways and thus damage the interests of all those who work on the railways. So I agree with my hon. Friend. The strike is damaging and unnecessary.

I hope that strike action will cease, because it is perfectly possible to reach a modern employment salary deal for the signalmen, as it has been possible to do for so many others. I hope that the signalmen will get on with negotiating that.

Dr. Spink: Notwithstanding the welcome recent improvements, as reflected by the passengers charter, and also the improvements that will flow from the £100 million resignalling project and the 25 317 sliding-door trains that will be introduced at the end of next year, does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot improve services while the hard men of the left are on strike?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to his own line, the London, Tilbury and Southend line. He is right to draw attention to the improvements on that line. Those improvements have come through management and employees working together in advance of the substantial capital investment to which he referred. I repeat that I believe that the strike is damaging to the railway industry and all who work in it. It is unnecessary, because it is perfectly possible to have a good, modern employment package for the signalmen. I hope that the strike will now end.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance from the Dispatch Box that, if there were an accident on the railways in the Network SouthEast area arising out of the use of untrained signalmen, Railtrack would be fully insured against any claims for damages?

Mr. MacGregor: Railtrack is taking all the steps necessary to ensure safety, as everyone would. Railtrack has informed the Health and Safety Executive of all the competence checks that it is applying to ensure that its legal duty on safety is met. It is for the inspectorate to ensure that that happens.

Mr. Snape: Does the Secretary of State agree that, if Railtrack is allowed to make an offer similar to the 5.7 per cent. offer that was withdrawn following his intervention, that would be likely to make a majority of signalmen reflect on whether they should go back to work? If his hon. Friends are going to trot out those hoary old stories about the hard left, is not it about time that he joined the hard left and we wheeled out Mr. Solomon Binding and allowed him to negotiate freely between the two sides without the interference of the Secretary of State or some of his silly hon. Friends on the Back Benches?

Mr. MacGregor: I have made it clear that the Government's approach to public sector pay should be followed in this case. The approach is that any productivity improvements for the future—of which there are many because there are still an awful lot of very old-fashioned practices on the railways—should be self-financing and the total cost should be met out of Railtrack's wage bill. That is the position that I have made clear. I believe that the offer that has been made is reasonable.

The real question, which has been often asked and never answered, is whether the Labour leadership will condemn this unnecessary and damaging strike. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has said that he supports the strikers. Will the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), on behalf of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), say whether the Labour leadership condemns the unnecessary strike, which is damaging to the railways and all who work in them. Yes or no?

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that all Conservative Members want to see improving standards of service on Network SouthEast? Is not it clear that the image of the region will suffer so long as the RMT strike continues and continues to be dominated by a handful of Marxist-Leninists, many of whom have friends on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend on two points. First, escalating the strike to two days a week looks like a throwback to the sort of actions that we saw in the 1970s, which so damaged the industries affected. Secondly, the strike will be damaging for railwaymen because many passengers are finding alternatives means of transport and some of them will stick to them. Even worse, all that is happening at a time when we are trying to get more freight off road and on to rail, particularly with the opening of the freight terminals to the channel tunnel, a major opportunity for the railways. Having unreliable trains that do not run because of a strike is not the best way of attracting new freight on to the railways. That is why I say that the strike is damaging, unnecessary and not in the interests of railwaymen.

Mr. Harvey: Passengers in the south-east and elsewhere have experienced disturbances for some weeks because of the dispute over productivity and pay. Does the Secretary of State agree that, given that the efforts of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service to bring about a reconciliation do not appear to have succeeded, it is time for the matter to go to independent arbitration? Will he urge that on Railtrack?

Mr. MacGregor: This is a matter for ACAS. I hope that the two sides will get together again with ACAS because I do not believe that all the issues have been

thoroughly discussed and negotiated. A modern employment package is on offer which, not least in terms of improved, much-enhanced basic pay and much-enhanced pensions, is in the interests of signalmen as well as of the railway industry.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State give a clear and unequivocal answer to the question: is there any person working in a signal box anywhere in Britain on days of industrial action who would not be there at other times in terms of achieving the certificate of competence? Have the conditions changed in any way to accommodate the industrial action? Does he agree that if the Government were to get out of the dispute, it could be solved very quickly? Will he answer another specific question: will he allow Railtrack to restore the 5.7 per cent. offer which took account of retrospective productivity gains which it knew were fair, which the unions knew were fair and which only the Government prevented from being delivered?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that Railtrack ensures that all staff operating signals are competent to do so under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the Railway (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994. It is reasonable for the Government to have an approach towards public sector pay, given the substantial proportion of overall Government expenditure that is involved—more than 25 per cent. I note that the Labour party is talking about controlling public expenditure, but shies away from any steps that are taken to do so. It is reasonable for the Government to have an overall attitude to the matter, but it is for Railtrack and the RMT to negotiate. All hon. Members will have observed that, once again, those on the Opposition Front Benches are refusing to make clear their position on an unnecessary and damaging strike.

Historic Buildings

4. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the beneficial effect on historic buildings of the removal of heavy traffic from towns and villages by diverting it on to new bypasses.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): Right hon. and hon. Members throughout the House remind me ceaselessly of the benefits of bypasses, for both the buildings and the people of communities living with high levels of through traffic.

Mr. Alison: Representing, as he does, a cathedral city, will my hon. Friend harness his natural ecclesiastical sympathies to his considerable political weight to expedite the day when Selby abbey is embellished and protected by the Selby bypass?

Mr. Key: Yes, of course I will. Since the memorable delegation that my right hon. Friend brought to see me last year, progress has been made. The forces of nature, however, cannot be ignored and, in engineering terms, the scheme is particularly difficult. There have been problems with ground work, but I hope that compulsory purchase orders can be published in the autumn.

Mr. Flynn: Does not the Minister realise that growth in traffic has meant that bypasses are being deserted and that traffic is going back into the historic heart of cities, poisoning the people there with an unprecedented mixture of carcinogens, benzenes, and PM_{10}s? All are produced and pumped out into the atmosphere. They are then held in place by a lid of barometric pressure and a windless day, and are cooked by the sunshine. We are creating a lethal cocktail for our people to breathe in and we do not yet know the results of the inquiry into what happened in December 1991. As this enormously dangerous, uncontrolled experiment is occurring in our cities every fine day, how on earth can we contemplate doubling the growth of traffic?

Mr. Key: The answer to the second question is, easily; the answer to the first is, can the hon. Gentleman name one?

Mr. Wolfson: Does my hon. Friend agree that when new bypasses are built or motorways widened, one of the continuing problems is that of noise? Does he support my contention that, where possible, quieter road surfaces should be used? Porous asphalt, in particular, is a positive move forward and we want much more of it.

Mr. Key: Of course my hon. Friend is right. Noise can be an abomination and can ruin the quality of life of many people. But my hon. Friend should not rely only on porous asphalt. Technology is on our side and even better surfaces are now being developed. For example, whisper concrete is not only quieter but lasts many times as long as porous asphalt, which means that roads do not have to be dug up as often.

Trunk Roads Review

6. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received concerning the publication "Trunk Roads in England 1994 Review".

Mr. Key: We receive many representations about road improvement schemes from individuals and organisations, the majority of which express concern that it has not been possible to proceed with particular schemes as fast as people would like.

Sir David Knox: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great concern in my constituency about the removal of the Leek-Rushton bypass from the national trunk road programme? What measures does he intend to take to deal with the problem of congestion in Leek, and does he think that the project should be reinstated in the programme?

Mr. Key: I remember very well the representations that my hon. Friend made on behalf of his constituents earlier this year—and I, too, was sorry that the Leek bypass was withdrawn on environmental and economic grounds. But the district council and the Highways Agency are meeting on 22 July to consider a package of local improvement measures for the town and I should not wish to pre-empt those discussions.

Traffic (London)

8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many (a) private cars, (b) buses and (c) other vehicles are currently using London's roads; what this figure was (i) 10 and (ii) 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I am afraid that the figures that my hon. Friend wants are not readily available in the form that he requested, but, for instance, between 1972 and 1990, the number of motor vehicles crossing the cordon line around inner London in a 24-hour count rose by 16 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that more and more of my constituents are being forced on to the roads—

Mr. Flynn: Riding horses?

Mr. Greenway: Well, certainly Shanks's pony, and no doubt some of them would like to use horses to overcome the problems of getting to work that are posed by the strike. Is not it outrageous that they are being exploited— and constituents throughout the country are being exploited — by a group of people whose best interests would be served by their getting back to work and staying there?

Mr. Norris: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right. His constituents will investigate other means of getting to work and some, no doubt, will continue to use them when this sorry dispute is over. It seems to me to be an absolutely classic case of how to commit industrial suicide.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Is the Minister aware that my local authority, Camden, today issued a report showing that European Union guidelines on nitrogen dioxide and ground-level ozone have been breached consistently in the past month? What additional funds are the Government attempting to find, first, to create more bicycle lanes in my local authority and, secondly, to provide a properly integrated public transport system for London and Londoners?

Mr. Norris: I am never greatly surprised by anything that Camden council does, but the Government acknowledge that the problems of air pollution are extremely serious. The hon. Lady should know of the extensive pattern of works and programmes that is in place to improve air quality, of which improved facilities for cyclists is an important element. She will be aware of the 1,000 mile cycleway that the Department of Transport has sponsored, which I am pleased to see boroughs taking forward. I hope that she will note that a number of Labour boroughs have seemed to be extraordinarily unwilling to introduce their 1,000 mile cycleway plans, but perhaps she will urge them to do so more quickly.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that during the years of economic growth in the 1980s the number of people commuting by car in central London fell and the number of people using public transport rose, and is not it a tragedy that in the past month and a half every single person who relies on the railway, as many of my constituents do, has been shown that the railways are unreliable and that most of the investment will be delayed by this ridiculous strike? Is not it about time that RMT-sponsored Members of Parliament started siding with the traveller and not with antiquated union agreements?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend must be entirely right. It cannot be anything other than sheer industrial lunacy to kill the basis of the industry that one hopes will provide one's future employment. That is exactly what the RMT signalmen are doing in the dispute. The sooner they understand that, the better they, and Londoners, will be.

Mr. Raynsford: Why was the Minister so coy about revealing the figures? Does he accept that, over the past 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the volume of traffic involving private cars and lorries coming into London and, simultaneously, a drastic and very serious decline in the use of London's buses? Does he recognise that that is the path to disaster in London? Until the Government understand the lesson and change their policy, all that Londoners will have on offer is a nightmare of increasing congestion, pollution and traffic chaos.

Mr. Norris: I am delighted to say that, as London has had a Conservative Government for most of the past 20 years, economic activity has increased substantially and the amount of traffic has increased with it. However, the hon. Gentleman should get his facts right. The number of passenger journeys on London's buses increased by 8 per cent. between 1982 and 1992.

Mr. Jessel: Given the enormous importance of both bus and car traffic in London, will my hon. Friend send for papers from Kingston council about its intention to close Kingston bridge for repairs for an entire year? That will cause enormous disruption as there will then be a six-mile stretch of the Thames within Greater London without any road bridge.

Mr. Norris: I understand my hon. Friend's quite proper concern about Kingston bridge, which is in his constituency. I hope that he will appreciate that it is not a bridge for which I have direct responsibility. However, if my hon. Friend would care to discuss the matter with me, I will certainly do what I can to assist.

Pollution

9. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action is he taking to reduce the level of pollution caused by motor traffic.

Mr. MacGregor: As a result of improvements to vehicle standards, the MOT emission check and the planned real increase in fuel duty, pollution from motor traffic is falling and will continue to do so until well into the next decade. We continue to be concerned about this problem, are undertaking further research and would be ready to take further action when appropriate.

Mr. Denham: When 1 million asthma sufferers are at risk from air pollution, will not the Minister's words strike everyone as a sign of complete complacency? Are not even his smallest priorities wrong? Is not he embarrassed by the contrast between the ludicrous amount of energy that has been spent on the ridiculous cones hotline and the difficulty that people have in reporting polluting vehicles to the authorities? Is he aware that my constituents are told that they must ring Bristol at their own expense, that no one has ever been prosecuted as a result of a telephone call to the unit in Bristol and that none of the police forces have the portable devices necessary to test and then prosecute grossly polluting vehicles?

Mr. MacGregor: On the last point, we are specifically carrying out research to discover what can be done to achieve a fully effective system, as there is not yet one. However, the hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong about complacency. A substantial number of actions have been taken in the past three years, some of which I have listed,

and the introduction of catalytic converters will reduced harmful emissions by more than 75 per cent. It is important that such actions are taken at European Union level, not least because continental sources account for roughly half ground-level ozone concentrations in the southern part of Britain. That is why we are pursuing the matter at that level, why further measures are being taken in the Council of Ministers and why I am always ready, because I very much share the concern about the problem, to consider other action which could be taken.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend accept that while all those measures are good, if traffic is stationary in one place for a long time, there is a build-up of pollution? May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the village of Tolpuddle yesterday held the annual commemoration of the Tolpuddle martyrs? The traffic jams consequent upon that were horrendous. However, for 364 other days of the year, my constituents suffer from the same problem. Will my right hon. Friend have a word with the Minister for Roads and Traffic to ensure that the Tolpuddle bypass is moved up the list as a matter of urgency?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, we have drawn up a list of priorities for bypasses, and he is right to draw attention to their importance. Traffic that is either not moving or is moving very slowly pollutes the atmosphere much more than normal moving traffic. That is why it is so extraordinary that the Liberal Democrats have committed themselves to removing 41 major motorway improvements, which is bound to have considerable environmental disadvantages, not least in respect of the atmosphere. The many traffic calming measures and other measures that we are introducing, in particular the red routes in London, are designed to make a contribution to improving the situation. We have to take a series of steps, and those are just some of them.

Ms Walley: Rather than going it alone, why will the Secretary of State not say that it is important that he should work with the Departments of Health and of the Environment? It is impossible to do anything about the problem of pollution if he is not prepared, with his colleagues, to set standards for, and to monitor, air quality. Is not it the right hon. Gentleman's roads programme which is at fault? Is not the real problem that it is generating more traffic?

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Lady that we co-operate in working on those issues and in working on planning policy guidance note 13 to find solutions. I beg the hon. Lady to understand that the roads programme has an important contribution to make to our economic competitiveness, which is the other important part of it, as well as to enabling the many millions of our citizens who want to use their cars more to do so. The programme is important because unsatisfactory roads which cause great congestion and act almost as car parks with cars ticking over pollute the atmosphere much more than roads on which traffic moves freely.

Roads Budget

10. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what fraction of his Department's annual budget is spent on roads; and what fraction of journeys in Britain every year is made by road.

Mr. MacGregor: Over the past three years, just under half of my Department's total budget was spent on roads. Given that nearly 90 per cent. of all journeys nationally are by road, that demonstrates how my Department's expenditure is skewed relatively towards public transport.

Mr. Merchant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever some people might pretend, his figures powerfully demonstrate the extent to which his budget is deliberately accentuated to encourage public transport rather than private transport? Should not my right hon. Friend be strongly congratulated on achieving that success?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That success shows in the many large public transport projects that we are currently undertaking, and it shows also in the figures. Planned investment in public transport remains at historically high levels and it will involve expenditure of not far short of £6 billion over the next three years.

Mr. Tony Banks: When will the Secretary of State accept that the more money he spends on roads, the more people will use private vehicles and the more congestion and pollution there will be? At the moment, Londoners are choking to death. Hospitals are inundated with people with respiratory diseases and the Government are doing nothing about it—they are stunningly complacent. When will the Secretary of State take action? For example, on days when pollution reaches danger levels, he should ban the use of private vehicles in central London and he should also start doing something about engines that pollute London. Is he aware that, while he is stunningly complacent, people are choking to death on the streets of London?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already explained that we are taking a considerable number of measures. As the hon. Gentleman knows, one of the potential measures that we are looking at is congestion charging in London, on which we are doing probably the biggest piece of international research that has ever been done. I notice that the hon. Gentleman is committed to banning vehicles on the roads in central London. I do not believe that that is what the vast majority of people want.

Mr. Sumberg: May I tell my right hon. Friend of the widespread concern in my constituency at the way in which his budget is being spent on the M62 relief road? He has now acquired a number of houses in my constituency. Many of them are empty and many are in disrepair. There is widespread concern among my constituents about who will take tenancy of those properties. Will my right hon. Friend urgently look at the management that is undertaken by the Highways Agency so that we can put a decent, sensible system into operation?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is currently doing just that.

Mr. Dobson: The Secretary of State has acknowledged that this year he is spending more than £2 billion of taxpayers' money on building new roads. Could he change his priorities and allow Railtrack to spend £5 million on settling the signalling staff's dispute? Is not that what it would have done with its offer of 5.7 per cent. if the Secretary of State had not intervened and stopped the payment?

If the right hon. Gentleman says that he cannot take the money from the roads programme, would he consider

diverting it from his privatisation programme? He is pouring £5 million into the pockets of one firm of City lawyers which is to advise him on privatisation. Does not he think that most passengers would consider the money better spent on the signalling staff?

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the money that we are spending on our rail reforms will ensure a much better railway for the future. The intention is to attract more passengers and freight on to rail. That is why I am concerned about the current strike: at the very moment when we can attract more freight on to rail, it is discouraging people and companies. I note that the hon. Gentleman still refuses to condemn this thoroughly unnecessary strike.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

29. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to improve the effectiveness of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Since 1988, the Serious Fraud Office has made a real contribution to the investigation and prosecution of serious fraud. A number of detailed recommendations of the recent review have already been implemented; others are in hand, and others are being studied.

Mr. Sykes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the fraud police are doing an excellent job, and that eight times out of 10 they get their man? *[Interruption.]* Will Opposition Members please stop gibbering? One might as well go to London zoo. Would not joint vetting further improve those tremendous statistics?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The Serious Fraud Office has a commendable record in achieving convictions in the cases that it brings to trial; in more than 80 per cent. of cases, the principal architect of the fraud has been brought to justice.

My hon. Friend is also right to mention joint vetting between the Serious Fraud Office and the fraud investigation group of the Crown Prosecution Service. They are getting together to decide which case should go to which body, starting next week. I commend that move.

Mr. John Morris: Is the effectiveness of prosecutions likely to be enhanced or diminished by the departure from office of the Attorney-General's Parliamentary Private Secretary? Will he give a categorical assurance that he was not approached by his ex-PPS as an intermediary in the case of Mr. Charrington and that the Paymaster General —who is responsible for Customs—was not approached either? Will the Attorney-General clear the air in regard to why his PPS has departed and, I understand, is not to be replaced?

The Attorney-General: I am surprised that the shadow Attorney-General should concentrate on such a matter.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many are not as happy as some commentators about the work of the Serious Fraud Office? Does he accept that many believe that serious fraud should be tried not by juries but by technical assessors, as recommended by the Roskill report?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend has expressed a view which is supported by a number of people. At present, I do not share that view; over the past 13 years, during which I have considered the matter carefully, the principal difficulties have tended to arise from the need to arrange an effectively mounted prosecution and to ensure that judges with the difficult and onerous task of trying the cases are properly trained and have the right background.

Mr. John Morris: Is the Attorney-General unable to give the categorical assurance for which I asked, or is he just plain insolent?

The Attorney-General : I am perfectly able to do so, but it does not really arise from the question.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is not it a fact that the Customs and Excise prosecuting authority is fiercely independent and is not swayed by anything that any Member of Parliament may ask, or not ask, of its favour? It is sometimes influenced by the advice that it gets from the Attorney-General, but it is always fiercely independent in making its decisions.

The Attorney-General: My hon. and learned Friend is entirely right. The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) has already received answers to his questions. If he would only refer back to them, he would not bother to ask them again.

War Crimes

30. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress of beginning prosecution proceedings in the United Kingdom against those held responsible for Nazi war crimes.

The Attorney-General: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is continuing to investigate about 28 cases and has submitted interim reports to the Crown Prosecution Service in 10 of those. Police inquiries are not yet complete and no decisions can be taken about prosecutions until they are.

Mr. Winnick: Is not there all the difference between what may happen in the heat of battle, as in the Falklands war in hand-to-hand fighting—although I do not condone anything improper that might have occurred, even then —and the systematic, cold-blooded murder of men, women and children, as was the case with the Nazi war crimes? What sort of message would go out to those committing such crimes, be it in Rwanda or Bosnia, if those who had committed the most terrible crimes against humanity were not brought to justice simply because of the delay of time? They should not have come to Britain in the first place, but if they have come to Britain and there is evidence against them, should not they be tried, regardless of time?

The Attorney-General: The House made its views on this matter clear when the War Crimes Bill came before it. That Bill has passed into law and the police are properly carrying out the investigations and will, in due course, make their report to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The matter will then be considered in accordance with the law.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that if there are allegations against anyone resident in this country who may have participated in heinous crimes in concentration camps on the continent during the last war, the public believe that those people should be investigated and prosecuted, if necessary?

The Attorney-General: The point that my hon. Friend is making tallies well with the investigations that are being carried out.

May Inquiry

31. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich case; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The total reported costs at 7 July 1994 were £2,150,000.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Solicitor-General satisfied that more than £2 million of taxpayers' money was used on Sir John May's inquiry, which had no power to subpoena witnesses or to call documents and yet absolved from blame all those involved with miscarriage of justice, except those people cleared by the Court of Appeal? Does not he know a cheaper source of whitewash?

The Solicitor-General: Opposition Members were quick to adopt Sir John May's findings in the Maguire inquiry when it suited their book. Now that it does not, they sing a different tune.

War Crimes

32. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to bring prosecutions under the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply a few moments ago to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Townsend: Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that more than £8 million has been set aside for war crime prosecutions this year, but none for next year? How is evidence to be obtained from foreign countries concerning alleged events that took place more than 50 years ago? Will he take a close look at what happened in Australia, Canada and Israel, where they went down a similar path and ran into serious trouble?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right—£8 million had been provisionally set aside in the event that prosecutions took place this year. I well understand my hon. Friend's views on the matter. It is difficult to investigate events that took place 50 years ago. That is why it has to be done carefully and scrupulously, as I assure my hon. Friend is being done.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister accept that time can in no way discharge the heinousness of the crimes that were perpetrated by some of the Nazis against a large of number of people, including Jews? Under the circumstances, £8 million is money well worth spending.

The Attorney-General: I entirely accept the first part of what the hon. Gentleman says. Of course, the investigation has to be able clearly to establish what did or did not happen 50 years ago so that the question whether there is a realistic prospect of conviction of any person can be properly evaluated.

Matrix Churchill

33. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received in the last month on the prosecution decisions which were taken in relation to Matrix Churchill.

The Attorney General: I have received no such representations.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Attorney-General aware that, as a result of his questionable involvement in the decisions relating to the prosecutions of Matrix Churchill, 600 people working for that company lost their jobs? Before he perhaps loses his job in the next few days, would not it be right for him to say that his involvement in that incident was regrettable and to apologise to those workers?

The Attorney-General: No. If the hon. Gentleman, who is a lawyer himself, does the subject justice and takes the trouble to read and think carefully about my part and the part of others, he will realise that it was done carefully and with complete integrity, in accordance with the law as it was understood at the time.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Non-governmental Organisations

36. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to provide further assistance to British non-governmental organisations working to assist development.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The 14 per cent. increase for the joint funding scheme and 8 per cent. for the volunteer sending programme for 1994-95 are very significant increases at present.

Mr. Rowe: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but can he give the House an assurance that the tragedy, and the urgent requirements, of the refugees flooding into Zaire from Rwanda are being carefully considered by his Department and that action will be taken to make it as easy as possible for NGOs to get every possible assistance as quickly as possible?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I know that non-governmental organisations will be assisting. At present, there are three aircraft. Two aircraft are on their way—one to Entebbe and the other to Nairobi. The first is the largest and will be unloaded in Entebbe; the second will arrive in Nairobi and wait for clearance to travel to Goma. A third aircraft is leaving tomorrow. Those aircraft are taking emergency humanitarian relief items which have been sent as a result of the assessment that was made, before the weekend's television pictures, by the ODA mission which, only last week, visited the area, including the particular spot where so many of the refugees are.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister will be aware that the non-governmental organisations are clear in their message: not only in Zaire but in Uganda and Tanzania,

there is a need for significant extra help to deal with what is not simply the immediate crisis of refugees fleeing from Rwanda but what is likely to be the long and medium-term duty to look after them—certainly in the indefinite future. Given that the Government have made special additional allocations in the past when there has been a particular crisis in another part of the world, can the Minister undertake to the House that that is under active consideration and that, if necessary, such money will be forthcoming from the British Government?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We certainly remain ready to do more. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, since the crisis began, £11 million has been committed bilaterally for refugees and displaced people in the area. The assistance being delivered by the three aircraft to which I just referred, which is worth some £2 million, is additional to that.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my hon. Friend agree that the extra resources given to non-governmental organisations is money well spent, especially bearing in mind that the non-governmental organisations have specialised knowledge, such as I saw in their family planning programmes in Malawi?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right. Non-governmental organisations generally react swiftly, are flexible and can get into remote areas more quickly than anyone else. It is for that reason that over the past three years we have doubled our overall funding to non-governmental organisations from £65 million to £150 million a year.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister focus on the fact that there are now perhaps 1 million or more refugees from Rwanda in Goma in eastern Zaire? Is he aware that representatives of British aid agencies today described the situation there as "wall-to-wall bodies", and that the emergency facing the region is on a scale unlike anything ever seen, even in Africa? What has the Minister done to implement UN decisions on humanitarian relief for Rwanda and on other measures to assist aid agencies in the distribution of vital emergency relief? Does the Minister recognise that hundreds of thousands of people are in real danger in Goma and elsewhere, and that humanitarian intervention on a massive scale is now absolutely necessary?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, we have responded and continue to do so. As I said in my earlier answers, ODA officials were there only last week. They assessed what we could do immediately, and we are doing it. Goma airport is still closed, but we hope that it will be open tomorrow so that the second aircraft which I mentioned can land there, and the third aircraft can land on Wednesday.

World Population Conference

37. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the status of planning for the world population conference to be held in Cairo in September.

41. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on preparations for the United Nations international conference on population and development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Planning for the international conference on population and development is well advanced. My right hon. and noble Friend will lead the British delegation.

Dr. Twinn: Will my hon. Friend confirm that additional resources will be made available by the Government to help implement what we hope will be the important outcome of this conference?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, we very much hope that in the next two years—we have a planning figure in mind—we will spend some £100 million on family planning. That will be a 60 per cent. increase over current spending, which is already high and has increased every year since 1991. It will be vital for more to be spent in that sector following the conference.

Mr. Ottaway: I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend on the huge increase in funding which was announced last week by Baroness Chalker in what I believe to have been a significant speech. Will my hon. Friend reject any criticism of the increase, and can he tell us what are the prospects of some of our European partners matching the increase in funding before the Cairo summit?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Every second, almost three babies are born into the world and I very much agree with the impact of my hon. Friend's argument. We will certainly press all our European Union colleagues, and those responsible for the Commission's aid programme generally, to increase spending in that sector. We believe that the conference comes at a most critical junction, and it may well determine, through action and policy, whether the population of the world doubles or trebles in the next century. If we do the right things, it will only double.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Minister accept congratulations on the positive response that the Government have shown with regard to this important issue? In respect of the conference in September, will he attempt to get his officials briefed so that they are not misguided by the propaganda emanating from certain quarters to the effect that it is now the feminist position in the third world that women want to continue having more and more babies? That must be absolute nonsense and part of some religious propaganda organisation. It is in the interests of the whole population of the planet that population control is widespread.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is most certainly in the interests of us all, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is particularly in the interests of many women and their partners in the third world. Over half of the couples in the world practise family planning now, but we believe that at least 100 million families who would like to plan their families do not have access to family planning advice and services.

Mrs. Clwyd: Given that the population of East Timor has already been eradicated by one third due to the action of the Indonesian Government, may I ask the Minister immediately to investigate the atrocities in East Timor last week, when a further four people were killed and 74 imprisoned—

Madam Speaker: Order. The question concerns world population and the conference, and is not about atrocities. As interesting as her question may be, I fear that the hon. Lady is way off the beam on both points.

Uganda

38. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with the President of Uganda concerning assistance to that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Both my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister for Overseas Development had discussions with President Museveni during his recent visit.

Mr. Lidington: Does my hon. Friend agree that the good record of economic growth in Uganda since President Museveni took power illustrates the advantages of good government in generating benefits for the entire population of such countries and the sense of tying our own overseas aid policy to that principle?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is quite right: Uganda has been a good story in recent years. British bilateral aid stands at about £34 million a year and has remained at that level in recent years. There is a great deal of approval of Uganda's economic policies, which have led to economic growth of about 5 per cent. a year since 1987. Tomorrow, at the World bank's consultative meeting in Paris, we shall announce a new pledge of some £20 million of balance of payments support for the current year.

Self-help

39. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent aid programmes are focused on self-help.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The underlying objective of the whole aid programme is to build on and to promote self-help.

Mr. Arnold: Is not one of the greatest problems facing our overseas development programme the fact that it runs the danger of developing a complete reliance on what I would call the begging bowl mentality? Is not it important for our own overseas aid programme to concentrate on projects that allow self-help and thereby allow people to earn money and self-respect?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Self-help is central to the whole aid programme. I must tell my hon. Friend that most poor people in developing countries are extremely self-reliant. Our aid programme tries to help village and neighbourhood committees to look after water supplies, to maintain drains, to run kindergartens and to do other similar things. My hon. Friend might like to consider that when we spend between 80 and 85 per cent. of our bilateral aid in low-income countries, that is, of course, helping the poor to help themselves.

Social Housing

3.31 pm

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals for reform of the homeless legislation in England and Wales.

On 20 January, we issued a consultation paper with proposals to reform the homeless legislation so that, in future, there would be a single route for everyone seeking a secure or assured tenancy in local authority or housing association accommodation. My right hon Friend the Secretary of State for Wales issued a similar consultation paper at the same time.

Our main objectives in bringing forward the proposals were to enable local authorities to operate fairer allocation policies, while maintaining an effective safety net for families and vulnerable people who become homeless through no fault of their own. Nothing in the responses to the consultation paper challenges the logic of those objectives.

The present notion that households accepted by local authorities as homeless must be given "permanent accommodation" was not envisaged when the present statutory duty was created in 1977. It has grown up through case law, requiring long-term, settled accommodation. There is no reason why a household in suitable accommodation should be given a secure or assured tenancy for life merely because at some stage it has been accepted as statutorily homeless. That approach is not fair to people on the housing waiting list.

Our consultation paper attracted some 10,000 responses. I am arranging for a list of respondents to be placed in the Library of the House and copies of the responses themselves will be available for public inspection in my Department's library. A summary of what we intend to do in the light of the consultation, and a copy of my statement, have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

Many of the responses did not address the actual proposals, but responded to misleading claims by lobby organisations. Others wrote in about hypothetical effects of our policy. As I made clear to the House on 26 January, it is not and never has been our intention that families and other vulnerable people should be left to live on the streets or in unsatisfactory accommodation—as some of the more alarmist propaganda from our opponents has suggested.

The consultation paper set out 10 main proposals, many of which were welcomed by those who commented on them. A number of local authorities said that their present practice in relation to homelessness was not far from what the Government were proposing. Indeed, while there was much pleading for the status quo from vested interests, they offered no real answer to the main flaw in the current legislation—that those who apply for assistance as homeless gain priority in the queue for local authority tenancies at the expense of others who have comparable underlying housing needs.

We have taken careful account of those responses to the consultation paper that made substantive comments on our proposals. Part of our intention had been to give greater discretion to local authorities in the accommodation of homeless households, but many respondents asserted that that would place too great a responsibility on individual authorities. Accordingly, we concluded that we should modify the proposals in the consultation paper to reinforce the safety net for vulnerable homeless people.

We therefore decided that a local housing authority's new duty towards a household in need of assistance should start, as it does now, when an authority has reason to believe that someone may be homeless and in priority need, prior to assessment of the household's circumstances.

The consultation paper invited views about how long the duty to secure accommodation should last. We have concluded that local authorities' new duty should be to secure accommodation for a minimum period of a year for applicants and their households in priority need who have no suitable accommodation available to occupy, provided that the situation has arisen unintentionally.

Some households may be able to remain in the accommodation indefinitely—for instance, if they obtain an assured shorthold tenancy that is renewed. Others may find themselves accommodation on their own initiative; and it is right that people should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own housing where they can.

Also, in most parts of the country a 12-month period on the housing waiting list will be long enough for someone with real housing needs to obtain a local authority or housing association tenancy. However, if the household continues to need assistance, the duty will recur, subject to a review of the applicant's circumstances. Such a review would be needed within two years.

The consultation paper proposed that a local authority would not have a duty to provide assistance to a person who has any form of accommodation available. The Government recognise the good work of women's refuges and other short-stay, direct-access, hostel-type accommodation. We do not want that type of accommodation to silt up through lack of move-on accommodation. Accordingly, we have concluded that local authorities' duty to secure accommodation should extend to people in refuges, direct-access hostels and other short-stay places such as bed-and-breakfast hotels.

The consultation paper proposed that someone who was asked to leave by family or friends should no longer be automatically entitled to assistance. We have considered a number of ways of implementing that proposal, and have concluded that the best approach may be to modify current provisions on intentionality so that they can take proper account of why accommodation is being withdrawn. That should minimise the scope for abuse. We shall also tighten the code of guidance to urge authorities to investigate such applications more thoroughly than many have done in the past.

A number of respondents expressed concern that the consultation paper made little reference to care in the community or Children Act responsibilities. That was because our proposals are fully consistent with authorities' responsibilities under community care legislation and the Children Act. We remain committed to ensuring that suitable housing continues to be available for vulnerable people who cannot be expected to make their own arrangements.

I confirm the proposition in the consultation paper that people who are granted entry to the United Kingdom on the understanding that they will have no recourse to public funds should not be entitled to assistance under the new legislation. We also intend to implement the proposal that local authorities should be required to have their own

[Sir George Young]

appeals mechanisms for handling disputes. As the consultation paper says, we do not propose to disturb the current principles for deciding which local authority is responsible for someone seeking accommodation.

The Government intend to proceed with their principal proposal that, for new applicants, local authorities should only allocate secure tenancies in their own stock and the nominations that they make to housing association assured tenancies through a waiting list. Local authorities will have discretion over the allocation policies that they use to determine people's position on the list within the bounds set out in legislation. I emphasise that the proposed new system would allocate tenancies to those people in housing need more fairly than the present arrangements.

However, it has never been our intention that the Government should be involved in the details of allocation policy. Regulations would prescribe only minimum provisions—for example, to outlaw discriminatory practices, such as requiring a five-year minimum residence qualification.

We shall be inviting the Housing Corporation to take account of the new duties on local authorities in the statutory guidance that it issues to housing associations, so that it can continue to work in an effective partnership with local authorities.

The proposal to encourage local authorities and housing associations to establish joint waiting lists was largely welcomed, although housing associations especially were keen that that should be voluntary, and the Government are happy to give reassurance on that matter.

Many of the Government's proposals will require primary legislation, and we intend to introduce that when parliamentary time permits; as is currently the case, the legislation will extend to both England and Wales. In the meantime, we are considering what administrative action might be taken to further our objectives.

We intend to proceed with our plans to improve the fairness of local authorities' allocation policies, while at the same time maintaining a safety net for families and vulnerable people who become homeless. I commend our reforms to the House.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Does the Minister not understand that that is an unworthy, mean-spirited statement, whose intention is still to change primary statutory homeless legislation, "as soon as parliamentary time admits"? The statement represents an attack on the basic rights to housing provision that not even Mrs. Thatcher, as Prime Minister, was prepared to contemplate. Does the Minister not understand that the policy will further scapegoat the homeless, that it will not provide a single new home for anyone, and that it will waste millions of pounds of public money?

Will the Minister now confirm—contrary to his claims about the lack of flexibility of the current provisions—that, as his Department made clear in 1989, the homeless with children have no automatic right to housing at present?

Does not the Minister understand that, under the current legislation, a council's task is to assess people's needs and then, if satisfied that they genuinely need accommodation, to help them secure it, and that under the present regulations, that can be in council, housing association or private rented stock?

Does the Minister also recall that a thorough review of homelessness legislation was held between 1988 and late 1989, under Mrs. Thatcher as Prime Minister, and Nicholas Ridley and Chris Patten as Secretaries of State? Was not Chris Patten correct to conclude that the present Act remains important and strikes

"a reasonable balance between the interests of the genuinely homeless and others in housing need"?

He said:

"We do not intend therefore to change the law".—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *243*.]

Is the Minister aware that, throughout the months of the new review, he was unable to produce a shred of evidence to show what has changed since that Ridley and Patten review? Where is the detailed evidence to back up the logic of his objectives, which he claims remain unchallenged? Which council or voluntary organisation ever called for that review, apart from Westminster and Wandsworth—and we know about their strategic housing objectives? Which organisation fully supports the consultative document? How many of those 10,000 respondents were in favour of, and welcomed, all his consultative proposals?

Will the Minister confirm that even the Secretary of State for the Environment's local Tory council, Suffolk Coastal, says that his January proposals were totally unworkable? Will the Minister now say a little bit more to the House about the costs and consequences of the new policy? When can we expect to see the primary legislation which he claims many of his proposals need? When will it be brought before the House? When will he confirm to the House that housing the homeless in private rented accommodation is often twice as costly to public funds as council or housing association accommodation—sometimes four times as costly?

How can the right hon. Gentleman square the idea of a six-month private assured shorthold tenancy with the new minimum period of one year that he has announced this afternoon? Will landlords now be forced to give extensions after the six-month period? Was not the whole point of the Housing Act 1988 to introduce a six-month assured shorthold tenancy that people would not have the right to extend? What will happen to people at the end of the one-year period that he has announced?

Why is the right hon. Gentleman placing blind ideological dogma above practical common sense and value for money? Does he not understand that, if councils were simply able to lease empty homes, many more on the housing waiting lists throughout the country could be housed and at a lower cost to the Exchequer than at present?

How much more could be done if councils were allowed to spend their capital receipts—a policy that this Minister used to espouse from the Dispatch Box? Why does not he have the guts to admit that this whole tawdry exercise has nothing to do with housing need and everything to do with the "back to basics" fiasco of last October's Tory party conference?

After all these months, what are we left with but a ragbag of proposals with legislative details yet to come? Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that even his fellow Ministers have been appalled by his approach? Does he not remember the words of his hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who said that he had not yet met a single mother who had deliberately become pregnant to gain housing or financial advantage?

When Chris Patten explicitly rejected the Minister's approach, was he not right to tell the House that the real and long-term remedies for the levels of homelessness "are to be found in an effective housing strategy, based on the contributions of the private and public sectors".—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 244.]

Does not the Minister realise that it is his abject failure to secure such a strategy that lies behind the worst housing crisis this country has seen for decades, with the numbers of homeless having doubled since 1979, 850 families thrown on to the streets each week through repossessions, half a million building workers on the dole and a complete collapse in the council house building programme?

The policies announced today will only add to human misery and make that crisis worse. Instead of manipulating waiting lists, would it not be more positive to get back to building homes to rent for people who so desperately need them?

Sir George Young: On what the hon. Gentleman calls the "blind ideological dogma" behind my announcement, I remind him of what the chairman of the Labour party said on that very subject:

"We need to transform the housing service so we have more appropriate housing readily available and a housing waiting list structure that positively rewards those who have tried their best to take responsibility and have some order in their lives."

Referring to people in his constituency, he said:

"People there are not fools. If you cannot get a house by waiting on the list, you present the maximum number of reasons why you should receive priority. That is not encouraging people to accept responsibility in their own lives and society."

That was the chairman of the Labour party, and I endorse those proposals.

On the fundamental logic behind our proposals, I also remind the hon. Gentleman what was said in a leader in *The Guardian*:

"Who should have priority: a 'registered' homeless family in temporary but comfortable accommodation—or an 'unregistered' homeless family stuck in two cramped rooms in the home of a relative? Under present procedures the first has priority even when the second has more urgent housing needs ... the housing minister believes the criteria should be changed so that the individual needs of all families on the two separate routes to a rented home ... are weighed against each other. In principle he is right."

As for those supporting the proposals, many London boroughs—the London Boroughs Association at the time—supported our proposals.

The costs were set out in the consultation document. We estimated that they would be broadly neutral, though of course it will depend on when legislation is introduced and how it is interpreted.

On primary legislation, the House will understand that I cannot anticipate what would be in the Queen's Speech.

More people are moving off waiting lists now than when the present Administration came in.

Homeless acceptances, contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, have fallen year on year for each of the past eight quarters. There have been some 41 per cent. fewer people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation over the past year. So I entirely reject what the hon. Gentleman said about the Government's housing record and urge him to reconsider his rather hasty condemnation of the principles behind what the Government propose.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I want us now to proceed with brisk questions and answers. A number of hon. Members are seeking to be called. If hon. Members continue to make statements instead of asking questions, and if they do not receive direct answers, many hon. Members will be disappointed.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on listening to many of the more reasonable responses that came forward to the consultation document. Does he agree that nobody will benefit more from the statement than those single parents who are currently staying in rooms in cramped conditions—

Hon. Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is asking a question, if the House would listen.

Mr. Hendry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that nobody will benefit more than those single parents who are currently living in cramped conditions in their parents' home, but find that they cannot make progress up the waiting list, because people are always jumping to the top of the queue? Will not his statement today give them a fairer crack at getting a house of their own?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Going through the representations that were made on the consultation paper, I was struck by the lack of priority that many people gave to those who are on the waiting list, living in difficult conditions—often in worse conditions than those who had been accepted as homeless and placed in temporary accommodation. It certainly is the case that the people to whom my hon. Friend referred stand to gain from the changes that we now propose.

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): Does the Minister agree that the basic lack of affordable rented accommodation, which his proposals do nothing to address, means that putting people into short-term rented accommodation is simply introducing a new form of homelessness that we have not seen before—recycled homelessness?

Sir George Young: Let me remind the hon. Gentleman what his hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said when the subject was raised during a debate organised by *Roof* magazine:

"It is an unacceptable position that a first-time tenant, whether a conventional two-children married family, a single mum with three children, or single person with mental illness, goes necessarily and obviously into what may in many cases be brand new housing stock, when over the other side of the road are people who have been overcrowded for 30 years, paid their rent on time and cannot be moved."

I support what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said. Our proposals will put that injustice right.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend accept that one thing that his statement will do is ensure that my constituents in east Devon, who support his policy—it has nothing to do with London—will see that young couples who have been waiting to get on to a housing list, who will not get married or have children until they are housed, will now be able to have their housing need taken into account and not be permanently pushed down by people coming into my constituency, which is very popular because it is a seaside constituency, and all the local people are suffering?

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend speaks for many people who wait patiently on the waiting lists and are

[Sir George Young]

exasperated by the way in which the present position is abused in the way that he described. There will be much broad support for the principles behind the new legislation.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Is the Minister not aware that his proposals, so far as they affect the housing stress areas in the inner cities, will be greeted almost with incredulity? In boroughs that already have thousands of families who are homeless, and thousands of families who are living in disgusting, overcrowded conditions, what those families want is not a shift in priorities between one category of need and another, but more rented housing at rents that they can afford. Will the Minister tell the House what he will do about those wretched families when their one year of temporary accommodation comes to an end?

Sir George Young: The right hon. Gentleman's local authority was one of those which supported the Government's proposals. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman's local authority supported the proposals, and it was elected by local people. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) shouting at me like that. A democratically elected local authority, speaking on behalf of people in Tower Hamlets, supported the proposals.

As for the increase in new accommodation, we made a commitment at the most recent general election to provide 153,000 new homes through housing associations. We are exceeding that by 25,000, producing 178,000 new homes over that period.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend accept that I warmly welcome the proposals, particularly those about women's refuges, which will mean that the women there will not have to occupy them permanently, but will be assisted in finding somewhere else to live? Does he further accept that it is extremely unkind to young mothers to put them in a home of their own with no support, and not knowing how to look after a baby or a house? It is far better to put them in other sorts of accommodation and not in council housing.

Sir George Young: I am impressed by the good work done by women's refuges. That is why we modified the proposals that were originally sent out. My hon. Friend is right. Some young mothers aged 17 or 18, who already have to cope with bringing up a child, would not respond readily to the responsibilities that go with a local authority tenancy. It is often in their interests to put them in a hostel with other people in a similar position, with access to mature support from other adults before they take on a tenancy of their own. There is a role for hostels in exactly the circumstances that my hon. Friend has outlined.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Is not the Minister's statement good news for the manufacturers of cardboard boxes? Is it not a fact that the Government are setting up a conflict between those on waiting lists and those who are involuntarily homeless? Is it not a fact that the Government are strengthening the opportunities for victimisation of the homeless by exploitative landlords, who are already becoming millionaires because of the Government's policies?

Is this not a policy of people who do not care about human beings, about need or about poverty? Is it not a fact that the problem comes about because of the abolition of the local authority housing programme and the fact that the housing association programme is only a fraction of it? The policy is typical of the attitude of the Government, and the sooner they get out the better.

Sir George Young: That is absolute nonsense. The right hon. Gentleman should know that many local authorities, many of them Labour-controlled, have a much more enlightened approach to the role of the private rented sector in their area. They are developing constructive partnerships to make sure that good-quality private rented accommodation is available to those who are homeless. They are developing rent deposit schemes and rent guarantee schemes and they are fast-tracking housing benefit.

I do not share the right hon. Gentleman's view that everything that is publicly owned is good and everything that is privately owned is bad. There is much good-quality privately owned accommodation of which we should make better use, and much publicly owned accommodation that is a disgrace.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my right hon. Friend agree that he has earned the congratulations and thanks of the British taxpayers, who are fed up with forking out for foreigners who come here and obtain free accommodation, particularly in our cities? Many people who see the neighbours chucking out their teenagers so that they can get their children's accommodation paid for on the rates will think highly of the Government's proposals to make those teenagers think again and stay at home.

Will he explain that the legislation will strengthen the hands of councils, which can often find alternative accommodation outside their immediate area for people who seek accommodation, but cannot insist that people take the houses which are available? In all those ways, he will bring down the artificially inflated numbers on the housing lists and please the great majority of the British public who have to fork out for these things.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The homeless persons legislation was never meant to provide permanent accommodation for those who visit this country temporarily. As for local authorities' scope to use accommodation outside their boroughs, I hope that the local authorities will try to rehouse people in the area in which they live rather than place them outside. I recognise that in some boroughs that may not always be possible, but wherever the surplus accommodation is, we must make better use of it. We must make better use of the half-million empty properties, many of which could be used for those in housing need.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Is the Minister aware that last week my local authority had a debate on housing, and that Liberal Democrat councillors tabled a resolution on homeless people in Blyth Valley? In the past few years, homelessness there has trebled and the lack of housing has serious consequences for the borough.

The resolution asks me, as the Member of Parliament, to ask the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction when he will release capital receipts so that Blyth Valley and other authorities can build council houses for single people, and so that those people do not have to run around under the Rachmanism and profiteering of landlords?

Sir George Young: As I explained, there has been a downward trend in homeless acceptances in the past eight quarters, and, by and large, acceptances are decreasing. I am surprised to hear that they have increased so sharply in Blyth Valley. Capital receipts are a familiar subject of debate between the Government and Opposition. In a nutshell, capital receipts do not always arise in areas of greatest housing need. Our policy allows us to recycle the receipts away from areas that often have them to those areas that do not, simply because that achieves the better use and targeting of available resources.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Following the Minister's consultation paper, can we have common waiting lists, with local authority and housing association tenants joining the one list?

Sir George Young: There was widespread support for the proposal that there should be common waiting lists, which would mean that people in housing need would not have to register with a local authority and all the housing associations in the area. We propose to make progress with that proposition, which has been widely welcomed.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Why does not the Minister admit that the only reason for today's miserable statement is the collapse in affordable rented accommodation in both the public and private sectors? Since 1979, the figure has dropped by 2 million properties, yet at that time the Government dismissed such talk as "alarmist"—a word that the right hon. Gentleman used again today. Will he tell us who the alarmists are this time by putting the names of organisations that support his proposals in the House of Commons Library? Will he be judged by that, as his predecessors were, because in the past the alarmists have always been right?

Sir George Young: On being alarmist, the hon. Gentleman has perhaps read some of the literature put out by Shelter which states that our proposals would result in

"families with small children huddled all night in shop doorways."

No proposition has ever led to anything that remotely resembles that. Shelter also alleges that the policy

"would tear children apart from their parents."

Nothing in the proposals will have such an impact.

One of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) claimed in a recent debate that, as a result of the Government's policies,

"old lorries, caravans and tents"—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. 889.]

would be used. There has been much alarmist propaganda, which I hope people will now recognise as untrue.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite Opposition Members' comments, which were clearly prepared before he spoke, his statement will be widely welcomed, not only by our many constituents who have been waiting patiently on waiting lists for many years, but by local authorities, which are particularly keen to tighten up the rules on intentionality?

Sir George Young: I hope that local authorities will look at the details of my announcement. There has been a response to some of the concerns expressed by local authorities, and I hope that they will avoid the knee-jerk reaction that we have heard from many Opposition Members this afternoon.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): Does not the Minister accept that there is something obscene about a Minister for housing who takes time to produce legislation that argues about who should have the house —the needy or the even more needy? Will he not take on the proper responsibility of his role and ensure that next year he reverses the decline in resources that are made available to local authorities to build houses? Does he not accept that that is the real issue, and that that is what the people of this country expect him to do?

Sir George Young: The hon. Lady will have to await the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment later in the year about resources that are available to local authorities. I disagree with what she said at the beginning of her remarks. Whatever the level of supply for social housing, one needs to have a fair system of accessing. At the moment, we do not have such a system, which we are now proposing.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from Labour Members' comments is that they believe not only that capital receipts should be released but that there should be a substantial increase in local government expenditure on public housing? [Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."] My right hon. Friend has only to listen to the assent for that proposition to realise that that is so. Does he agree, therefore, that it is absurd to suppose that the Labour party is seriously concerned about controlling public expenditure and not increasing taxation?

Sir George Young: At the end of this statement, a debate will be held on exactly those matters. I notice my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Treasury Bench. I am sure that he will press the Labour party on the issue raised by my hon. Friend— what are its proposals for public expenditure?

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Will not these proposals inevitably mean that many homeless families will be forced from one short-term, sub-standard tenancy to another? What effects does the Minister believe that that will have on the education and health of the children involved?

Sir George Young: There is no reason why the scenario painted by the hon. Member should arise. We placed an obligation on local authorities to find people suitable accommodation for a year, and in many cases the owner of property— the landlord— is happy to renew it. Under the private sector leasing arrangement, many leases in London run for three years.

Many of my constituents in temporary accommodation ask whether they can continue to live in that accommodation rather than be rehoused in permanent accommodation owned by the local authority. It is a big mistake to assume that all temporary accommodation is bad and all permanent accommodation is good.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but will he tell the House how it will help service personnel who wish to return to their home towns to obtain accommodation?

Sir George Young: If my hon. Friend looks at the code of guidance that we issued to local authorities, I think that he will find specific reference to service personnel. He will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary

[Sir George Young]

of State for Defence has made a number of proposals to help those leaving the forces to buy their own accommodation in the private sector. A wide range of schemes are available to help service personnel put down roots in areas where they want to live, and I know that my right hon. and learned Friend takes this subject particularly seriously.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Minister explain to my constituents, who live in an area with limited assured tenancies and limited private sector accommodation, where the wait for a council house is more than five years, precisely what will happen to homeless families in the first year after they are accepted as homeless, and in the period thereafter? That is not clear from the statement. If they are not given a secure council tenancy, what will happen to them?

The Minister referred to "more thorough" investigation of applications from people who live with family or friends. As local authorities such as mine— the best authorities— already conduct thorough investigations, what additional investigations is he suggesting they should make?

Sir George Young: On the first point, I have been particularly impressed with what has happened in Derby, which is not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It has a good relationship with the private rented sector and is finding and taking advantage of property not previously available to homeless families. On the 12-month responsibility, the duty can recur if, after 12 months, there is still a difficulty with the local authority. On the final point, we propose to consult local authorities, which have a number of positive suggestions to make on how we can tighten the intentionality rules.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which he announced he is seeking to amend, was the origin, both in time and in cause, of an unparalleled explosion in illegitimacy and the breakdown of family life in this country? Will he accept from me that thousands of my constituents will be delighted to hear that we are bringing some justice back into the allocation of what will always be a scarce resource?

Sir George Young: The original legislation was never meant to be the main route into social housing; it was meant to be a safety net. Although the number of lettings has remained broadly constant in the past 15 years, the number of acceptances has increased dramatically because people have seen it as a faster route into social housing. It was never meant to be that.

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): Will the Minister tell me and the 9,000 people in Bradford who want housing how many of them will be rehoused as a result of today's statement? Is not the truth that the forward-thinking local authorities that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned today have considered the whole picture of housing— housing need and the need for houses — whereas the statement concentrates on one aspect? To ensure justice, the whole picture is to build houses. When will we hear something from the Government about when they will allow councils to build houses for people such as the 9,000 homeless people in Bradford?

Sir George Young: However many houses are built in Bradford, there must be a fair system for allocating them. That is why I believe our principles are justified, at whatever level of supply. I was recently in the hon. Gentleman's constituency in Bradford, where I opened a new housing association development built under city challenge. The Government are making extra resources available to the hon. Gentleman's city to meet the housing need to which he has just referred.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. Does he agree that people who are seeking social housing would benefit if housing authorities were more efficient? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are thousands of empty council houses in London? If local authorities were also to collect their rents, they could improve some of those houses.

Sir George Young: I warmly welcome the common sense in my hon. Friend's suggestions. Of course we need to maximise resources for housing and collecting the rents do that. Of course we need to maximise the use of homes which have already been built. Bringing empty properties back into use does that as well.

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): Does the Minister accept that securing a permanent home is a matter of paramount importance for the overwhelming majority of families in the United Kingdom? Does not his statement herald the creation of a whole tier of families who will simply be shuffled from one temporary let to another and never have the prospect of securing the permanent home they need?

Sir George Young: Securing a permanent home is indeed a valid objective which many people share. That is why it is important that securing the permanent home should be allocated on a fair basis.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement represents a substantial step towards a more rational allocation of housing in the United Kingdom? Does he also agree that only those most obsessed with political correctness are against the proposals? Would it not be better if they allocated more of their efforts to ensuring that the voids in public housing, particularly in Labour authorities, were available to the homeless, particularly in London?

Sir George Young: In order to persuade Opposition Members, I have quoted from *The Guardian*, I have quoted from the chairman of the Labour party and I have quoted the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). If I wanted to, I could quote Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk—[*laughter*]—but I will not. There is a very broad range of political support for the proposals that I have just put forward.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): The Minister must be aware of many cases, in respect of repossessions and marital breakdowns, when families have been taken into accommodation by relatives and friends. Does not the Minister's intention to tighten up the rules on intentionality say to those people, "Don't accept relatives into your homes for fear that they will never be rehoused unless you are forced to go to court against your own family or friends to evict them from your own home"?

Sir George Young: I understand that point entirely. There will be no need to obtain a court order in the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman has just described.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): As for the housing of ex-service men, is guidance enough? Will my right hon. Friend consider what can be done to make local housing authorities act more justly towards ex-service men and their families, when those men have been serving this country abroad? Is it not quite wrong that local housing authorities, many of which care nothing for the defence of this country, should be able to put such people at the back of the housing waiting list because of the lack of residential qualifications?

Sir George Young: I believe that we issued a revised code of guidance to local authorities last year on precisely the subject that my hon. Friend has raised. Of course I will consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to see whether we need to take any further steps to provide accommodation for those who are leaving the services.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): A Welsh Office Minister should be on the Government Front Bench for a statement of this importance, bearing in mind the growing housing crisis in Wales. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that our surgeries are crammed with people begging and pleading for affordable housing? The right hon. Gentleman's statement today makes it harder—not easier—for right hon. and hon. Members to help the homeless. Is not this cruel and brutal statement in effect a job application to join the Cabinet?

Sir George Young: I think that I am right in saying that, on Thursday 7 July, there was a half-day Supply day debate on housing in Wales. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister who replied to the debate explained exactly what we are doing to help people in Wales who are in housing need.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the major benefit of his proposals is that they address the key issue that homeless people have had unequal priority over many other deserving cases looking for social houses? I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement on that basis.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. At the moment, those who fall within the legislation are rewarded, in effect, with a tenancy for life in publicly funded housing, at the expense of others whose underlying need might be the same or even greater.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The Minister will be aware that, in Birmingham, we have successfully avoided the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for housing homeless families. Therefore, is the right hon. Gentleman concerned that, in his submission to the consultation, the outgoing director of housing, Derek Waddington, said that, if the proposals are implemented, he doubts whether Birmingham can continue to avoid using such accommodation.

How can the right hon. Gentleman's proposals be consistent with obligations under the Children Act 1989 when there is evidence that families living in temporary accommodation, because of the insecurity they suffer, are under considerable stress? Instead of taking us back to the era of "Cathy Come Home", would it not be better to ensure that local authorities can supply good-quality housing by using their capital receipts or borrowing on the back of their assets, and taking on board the rental income that will result from such homes being built?

Sir George Young: I do not agree with first part of the hon. Lady's assertion. Many people expect that, because there is no longer a guarantee of permanent accommodation, the homelessness route will not be quite as attractive as it is at the moment. There is substantial investment in housing in Birmingham. As the hon. Lady will know, the Castle Vale housing action trust is receiving additional funds over and above what Birmingham city council receives in the usual way.

I have dealt with capital receipts. If the hon. Lady wants to make the case for greater public investment in housing on behalf of the Labour party, I hope that she catches your eye, Madam Speaker, in the debate.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposals will be widely welcomed in the north-west, particularly in my borough of Wyre, because they draw a clear distinction between the statutory right of boroughs to house the homeless and the position of families on the waiting list, which is a completely different matter?

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that his proposals will mean that councils and other organisations in the public and private sectors will move closer together to find permanent accommodation for the homeless, rather than trying to put them as high as possible up the waiting list for council houses?

Sir George Young: It will certainly be the case that local authorities will have greater discretion to allocate housing on the basis of need than they have at the moment. I hope that they will work closely with the private rented sector to broaden the base of housing available for those in housing need.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Minister accept that many people will regard his statement as a pathetic response to the gravest housing crisis in post-war Britain? While scapegoating the homeless, lone parents, beggars and other vulnerable people, why do the Government constantly reject the example of previous Conservative Governments, for instance that led by Harold Macmillan, who launched major house building programmes? Why does the right hon. Gentleman refuse to combine capital receipts with unemployed construction workers, and build thousands of decent homes at affordable rents and prices for the thousands of British people in desperate housing need?

Sir George Young: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain how that great programme will be funded. We have had no clear answer to that point each time we have debated housing.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Perhaps the answer is that such a programme might be funded by the housing benefit that would have to be paid for rehousing homeless people in private accommodation.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman will have seen the estimates we made when we published the document earlier this year, when we estimated that the impact would be broadly neutral.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We are now going to move on.

Personal Statement

4.19 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal statement.

On 13 July, during the debate on Members' interests, I stated that I had placed letters on the letter board giving notice of my intention to refer to certain hon. Members in the course of the debate. I said that I had done so earlier that evening, and well in time. In fact, although I had every intention of notifying the hon. Members concerned, I found to my surprise that the letter board was closed, when I sought to leave letters there, and I handed in the letters at the Post Office.

I owe you and and the House a full apology in two respects, Madam Speaker. I inadvertently misled you when I stated that the letters had been left on the board; furthermore, I now recognise that letters left at that stage of the evening provided a totally inadequate warning in this case.

I deeply regret my actions, Madam Speaker, and repeat my sincere apology to you and the House.

Points of Order

4.20 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be grateful if you would give some thought to a problem that has arisen in relation to the boundary between the legislature and the Executive, and is causing concern to some of my colleagues and to me.

Until a few years ago, parliamentary private secretaries were appointed only by senior Ministers, and—as I understand it—the Minister concerned made the appointment personally. Parliamentary private secretaries were not members of the Government. Over the past few weeks, however, it has become apparent that some consider them to be so, and there have been reports of their being appointed, and sacked, by either the Chief Whip or the Prime Minister.

A list of members of the Government is regularly published in the *Official Report*. I think that it should be made absolutely clear—it may be worth your while to give some thought to this, Madam Speaker—that parliamentary private secretaries either are or are not members of the Government. If they are, certain rules, regulations and other considerations apply; if they are not, they have certain rights and responsibilities of a different kind. I think that the matter is important, Madam Speaker, and I should be grateful for your thoughts on it.

Madam Speaker: I do not need to give much thought to it. Parliamentary private secretaries certainly are not members of the Government.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether there has been any indication that a statement will be made on the appointment, or election, of Mr. Santer as President of the European Commission. You will recollect that there was much public interest in the vetoing of Mr. Dehaene, and I assume that the Government will wish to explain their reasons for selecting Mr. Santer. If they do not, it is extraordinary that Opposition Members—in whose hands the matter really is—have not insisted to the Leader of the House that the bipartisan non-discussion of Europe should end—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman asked me whether I was aware that a statement would be made; I have not been informed by the Government that they intend to make a statement at this stage.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise an issue that I raised more than three weeks ago with the Home Secretary by means of a parliamentary question; I also tabled an early-day motion, which has now been signed by more than 70 hon. Members. It is a serious issue. It concerns the use of forensic pathology photographs of murder victims in a leisure context. There is immense concern—

Madam Speaker: Order. I really cannot allow the hon. Lady, or any other hon. Member, to abuse points of order in this way. If the hon. Lady will come to the matter that is for me to deal with, without giving an explanation of the photographs or the early-day motion, I will attempt to deal with it; but I fear that she is abusing a point of order.

Mrs. Jackson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Although responses were received from the Secretary of State for Health, police officers, the Police Federation of Englsand and Wales and the British Medical Association, the Home Secretary has not even had the courtesy to write a letter.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Lady herself is quite capable of pursuing the matter with a Minister. It is by no means a point of order for me to deal with.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Is this a point of order?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I believe so, Madam Speaker. I was just wondering whether there had been any consultation with the Government on the appointment of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) to a £103,000-a-year job as a Commissioner.

Madam Speaker: That is nothing to do with me. It is certainly a bogus point of order if I ever heard one.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Is this another one?

Mr. Jamieson: Not a bogus one, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members may recall that I told the House last week that I hoped that its behaviour would start to improve on Monday this week. I am afraid that my words fell on fairly stony ground. I take this matter very seriously; I hope that the hon. Gentleman has a genuine point of order.

Mr. Jamieson: This is a genuine point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the Chancellor's parliamentary private secretary, the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr.

Oppenheim), to hand out pre-prepared questions to Conservative Back Benchers? If it is not, perhaps you can give us some guidance.

Madam Speaker: That is not a matter for me: it is a question of party discipline. I have seen lots of papers and early-day motions floated around on both sides of the House. When I first came to the House, one would not dream of showing someone an early-day motion in this Chamber; one would have been sent off with a flea in one's ear if one did. Members are in this Chamber to pay attention to what is taking place, not to sign early-day motions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Good, that has not fallen on stony ground.

Orders of the Day

The Economy

[Relevant document: The Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on Tuesday 5th July (House of Commons Paper No. 561-ii).]

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). Also, I have had to impose a ten-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm; I hope that those speaking at other times will exercise voluntary restraint.

4.25 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the publication of the Government's latest economic forecast, which shows growth continuing at a steady and sustainable rate and inflation remaining within its target range; and congratulates the Government on its economic policies which have laid the foundations for the non-inflationary growth, rising industrial production and falling unemployment that is now being seen.

I tend to agree with you, Madam Speaker, that many of the old ways are the best, but this summer economic debate is an innovation. It is the first so-called summer debate on the economy held in the House and it is intended to be an annual event, although I have no doubt that we have all attended the first annual dinner of organisations that have never held another. I think that this debate will last, however, as it is a sensible procedural consequence of moving to the unified Budget in November of each year.

As we have not debated the economy for some time, it also usefully fills the gap left between the Budgets that we now hold in November each year. In former times, during Labour Governments those gaps were filled by frequent Budget statements throughout the year, each correcting the Budget judgment in the previous statement. Those were a feature of Labour's mismanagement of the economy in the 1970s.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: With respect to the right hon. Gentleman it is a little early in the debate to give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "He was a Minister"]. A very long time ago, at the time about which I was complaining.

This debate will give hon. Members the opportunity to discuss the outlook for the economy now. We shall certainly relish the opportunity, for the same reason that the Opposition will not do so. The Government have a coherent economic strategy—the Opposition do not—and our strategy has delivered what are, potentially, the most favourable set of economic circumstances that Britain has enjoyed for more than a generation.

Mr. Sheldon: I will be very brief.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman is a very respected former Minister. May I contrast my situation to the one that he faced so many years ago. At this stage of recovery from recession, no Government since the war have produced an economic climate that combines steady growth with falling unemployment, rising productivity and low inflation of the type that we now have.

Mr. Sheldon: I am sorry to interrupt, but many people do not realise that it is seven months since we last had an economic debate, in December last year. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman pointed out, there was a time when we had frequent economic debates—perhaps too frequent—but we must move somewhere between the two extremes and that is worth mentioning at the beginning of his speech.

Mr. Clarke: During Labour Governments, we had very frequent economic debates and statements. I remember one occasion when a Labour Government made a fresh Budget statement before they had even finished debating the Finance Bill that flowed from the previous statement. I was pointing out that we have moved rather a long way from that—

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): My right hon. Friend made a serious point.

Mr. Clarke: On the serious procedural point, I agree that it is surprising that the House has got itself into a position in which there is a long debate on the Budget in November and a one-day debate in the summer. It is not for me and the shadow Chancellor to decide, but for the usual channels. I have suggested to my opposite number on at least one occasion that we might drop one day from future Budget debates and transfer it to the summer economic debate. That is a matter for the Select Committee on Procedure, the usual channels and others.

There have been many Supply day debates since the Budget. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is correct. It is extraordinary that the Labour party, which at times has had to scrape the barrel to find something to fill its allocation of Supply day debates, has kept away from economic policy and the state of the economy. I repeat my allegation: it is because the British economy is doing well, and because Labour has absolutely no alternative policy to put forward.

I have described the extremely good combination of circumstances which we have at present.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

The circumstances that I have described, which are confirmed by most outside observers of our economic situation, mean that we have grounds for cautious optimism at present. I regard that as a beginning. We must stick to the Government's successful economic strategy and deliver the increased prosperity and secure jobs which it should now be possible for us to deliver over the next few years, if international conditions allow. I believe that we are now poised for success. I do not believe that the Labour party has any alternative to our policy, but I am content to give way to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) if he wishes to put me right.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To put the record straight, will the Chancellor tell the House which of the Labour debates on education, housing, health and the Child Support Agency he regards as scraping the barrel? Which debate is irrelevant to the public spending needs of this country?

Mr. Clarke: The debate on the Child Support Agency covered a policy which had been supported by the Labour party and which had already been considered by a Select Committee. Is the hon. Gentleman claiming that at shadow Cabinet meetings he has been demanding time on the Floor of the House to put Labour's alternative economic strategy but unfortunately he has been fought off by his colleagues who found desperate matters to bring before the House? Of course he has not.

I have had a lot of jobs in government, as people always point out. I have never held a ministerial post where I have taken part in fewer debates on the Floor of the House. Even when I was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my opposite number used to challenge me on more occasions than the hon. Gentleman does. That is because he knows that what I have just said is right: things are going very well and the outlook is very promising. That is the result of the Government's policies. The hon. Gentleman has absolutely no alternative to them which he is prepared to put forward.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way once more and then I must be allowed to get on.

Mr. Budgen: As so many members of the public look for a less adversarial approach, would it not be generous to remind the House that support for the exchange rate mechanism, which was the feature of most hon. Members in the House, came particularly from Labour Members, and it is their embarrassment at having abandoned the official role of Opposition and having supported the Government in that disastrous policy which now prevents them from either criticising the present policy or, indeed, mentioning the past?

Mr. Clarke: I shall touch on my hon. Friend's favourite subject during my speech. He and I have never agreed, but he is right to point out that we always had the complete support of the Labour party on every aspect of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. Indeed, I believe that Labour is still committed to signing up to the Maastricht treaty, including the timetable for the exchange rate mechanism, despite the fact that no other member state is following that course at present.

Turning to mainstream economic policy and the economic situation—I did not intend to be too combative in my introductory remarks, which I thought were non-controversial—growth looks set to continue at its current healthy rate. Independent forecasters and the Government now expect growth to be higher than we were forecasting at the time of the Budget. They also expect growth to exceed the rate of inflation in 1994. That sounds as though growth in the economy exceeding inflation should be the norm. In fact, it has happened in the United Kingdom on only four occasions since 1960, and usually only because growth has been unsustainably high at times of boom, rather than inflation being low.

We now have a healthier situation. Growth is becoming increasingly balanced and the recovery is spreading throughout the economy. Exports and investments are strengthening, and export volumes from this country are now growing at an annual rate of 9 per cent., despite some continuing weaknesses in our most important European markets.

Investment looks set to grow faster than consumer spending in this year. As we say repeatedly and without any fear of sensible contradiction, Britain is now leading Europe out of recession. The European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development expect our growth rate to be the fastest of any major economy in Europe this year.

We have the fastest rate of industrial production and the fastest increase in retail sales of all major European countries. Ours is the only major European economy where unemployment has fallen in the past year, and it has now fallen by 330,000 since the last cyclical peak. Despite that pick-up in growth and the welcome fall in unemployment, the outlook for inflation also remains favourable.

Our inflation rate is well below the European Union average and it is at historically remarkable low levels for the United Kingdom. Sound money has been complemented by sound public finance. I am pleased to say that the Budget deficit remains on track to return to balance in the medium term. The combination of steady growth, healthy public finances and low inflation is the result of the Government's economic policies. It has not happened by chance, and it most certainly would not have occurred if we had followed the advice of any of the Opposition parties.

Sound money, sound finances and supply-side reform of the economy are the principles that guide our economic policy. We in government understand that, to achieve growth in living standards and to sustain rising industrial production, one needs low inflation and low public sector borrowing. One cannot have prosperity without sound policies.

This time last year, I said that Labour's economic strategy had about as much content as the average telephone directory. A year on, things have changed. A telephone directory now seems like a good read in comparison. The last time I addressed an audience of any size, a *Socialist Worker* demonstration burst in upon me, and there were rather more people involved than there are Labour Members in the Chamber at the moment. More to the point, they were the first people from a left-of-centre movement who appeared to have at least a clear idea of what they wanted and what alternative policies they had whom I had met for a long time.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has yet another chance to put forward alternative policies, and he needs to do the House the courtesy of addressing them. He needs to address the fundamentals of policy which, as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee has said, we should talk about on the rare occasions when we debate the issues.

The least that we could expect from the shadow spokesman of the principal Opposition party is for him to say whether he would do anything that the Government are not currently doing with regard to public borrowing, public spending or monetary policy. In my opinion, if he suggested anything which deviated significantly from the course upon which the Government are set, it would only threaten our sustained economic recovery.

Mr. Randall: Probably everybody in the House would accept that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's notion of steady growth is laudable. What some of us are genuinely worried about is the rate of that steady growth; whether it will ever be sufficient to reduce unemployment to a reasonable level and the social impact of that. What does he have to say on that?

Mr. Clarke: That is an important subject, to which I shall, if I may, return later. We are forecasting at the moment growth of 2.75 per cent this year. Nobody knows exactly what the trend growth is, but beyond that it comes to a point where it is not sustainable without risk and without a threat to inflation.

Fortunately, we already see that present levels of unemployment are falling as a result of that growth, and 330,000 was the figure which I have cited. But I agree that there is also a structural problem and, as we achieve sustained growth, we must take measures to make sure that we do not have a strong recovery with unemployment stuck at 8, 9 or 10 per cent. I shall return to that in a few moments. The Government have, in my opinion, coherent policies on that matter, which are gaining favour in international discussions.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was rising to answer on behalf of his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East the questions I asked about spending, borrowing and monetary policy. I do not believe that the Opposition have got a policy on unemployment either. They would do well to follow our own.

Mr. Hain: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I should like to make some more progress, but I will give way steadily.

On inflation, upon which I face silence, as always, from the Opposition, only the Conservative party, Madam Speaker, is the party of low inflation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Chancellor, but Madam Speaker left the Chamber 15 minutes ago, and I should be grateful if he adjusted his script.

Mr. Clarke: Mention of transvestites in politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, caused a disturbance at the LSE, and I do not intend to make any similar reference today. I apologise to you for addressing you as Madam Speaker.

As for low inflation, the record is extremely clear. Only the Conservative party is the party of low inflation and the figures speak for themselves. Under the previous Labour Government, inflation averaged 15.5 per cent.; inflation is now 2.5 per cent. and underlying inflation is 2.4 per cent. Since we came to power in 1979, the average rate of inflation has been 6.6 per cent.

Those low levels of inflation are not some abstract matter, because they have a real effect on people's lives. Let me give some obvious examples. The fierce competition between supermarkets has resulted in many food prices falling. Competition in the high street has meant that the prices of many goods, such as clothing and footwear, have hardly increased in the past year. Competition between manufacturers means that factory price inflation is at the lowest level we have seen for 25 years. All that low inflation brings real benefits to the shopping bags of real people at every level of income in our society.

The Conservative party also recognises the wider benefits that low inflation can bring. It brings the stability that our business leaders need if they are to invest with confidence in the future of our country. It provides stability for savers, whose resources finance investment and wealth creation. We do not support low inflation for economic reasons alone, although there are good economic reasons for achieving it, but because inflation is worse than a tax on

[Mr. Clarke]

those with fixed incomes, and is particularly hard on the weak and the poor. Inflation randomly redistributes wealth from that group to those with the economic muscle to withstand its debilitating effects, as we saw only too clearly in the late 1970s.

Let us never forget that, under the Labour Government of the 1970s, inflation was higher than interest rates on many occasions, so the real value of the savings of retired people fell. That is not the case now and I trust that it never will be again. Let me reaffirm that the Government have set themselves a target to keep inflation within the 1 to 4 per cent. range and to reduce it to the lower part of that range by the end of the current Parliament. We are determined to stick to that target, but what of the Labour party? Does it have a target for inflation? How does it propose to control inflation? The Opposition certainly will not do that by caving in to demands from their friends in the trade union movement, but their reaction to an 11 per cent. pay claim, which has come out of the blue at the moment, has hardly given anyone any grounds for assurance.

I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will set out some policy. What does he think of our inflation target? Is it too high? Is it too low, or is it about right? Would he accept that target? I am sure that all hon. Members would like to hear that answer.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On the issue of competition, is there any unease in the Government about the circumstances in which William Low, which is, after all, a large grocer retailer in Scotland, is about to be swallowed up by either Tesco or Sainsbury? Is there any unease about what might happen further to competition in the retail trade as a result of that? All I am asking is whether this matter is being looked at in government, because it surely should be.

Mr. Clarke: We have an extremely clear competition policy. We seek to stimulate competition for the reasons that I have given, but that does not include all takeovers and all reorganisations of businesses. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, which considers it in the normal way. It is for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to decide whether any particular merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I have no views on a particular takeover, including that named by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I should like to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his remarkably successful record of keeping inflation down, despite, incidentally, the 15 per cent. devaluation of sterling since coming out of the exchange rate mechanism, which bears out the monetarist analysis. What does he make of the state of the markets, particularly the high levels of long-term interest rates? When does he think that the markets will take on board the fact that we are serious, as I believe, about defeating inflation?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that the markets have strengthened slightly from the worst situation encountered. As my hon. Friend is aware, there have been international fluctuations in the marketplace ever since the Federal Reserve bank first moved its short-term rates a few months ago. It is arguable that it over-reacted to a situation that had built up in the previous year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said, the best reassurance that we can give the markets is that we are committed to our inflation target. We have an extremely good record of moving towards it, despite all the pressures of the past few years. I am quite sure that we can sustain confidence in that policy. I am glad to see that long-term rates have eased in the past few days.

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I will give way in a moment.

One of the steps that I have taken to reinforce our inflation policy has been to start publishing the minutes of my monthly meetings with the Governor of the Bank of England. I have done that to make it quite clear that the monetary authorities in this country should take their decisions on sensible judgments of the economic priorities of the moment, not give way to short-term political pressures. The result is that we are more open and we are discussing such matters more than we have ever done before.

We are certainly more open than the Labour party, so I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will at last contribute to the debate on monetary policy by getting up and telling me what he thinks of our target for inflation. Is it too high, too low or about right?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Gordon Brown: But why are the Government's inflation forecasts completely different from those of the Bank of England? Why are the Government predicting that inflation will just be 2 per cent. at the end of next year, but the Bank of England is now predicting that it will be as high as 3.5 per cent., far beyond the Government's target range? Is that not because the Government are assuming now that interest rates will rise? Will the Chancellor now answer the question that was put to him by his hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin): why have British long-term interest rates risen faster than in any other country except Canada?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that forecasts have a wide range of accuracy. *[Interruption.]* Of course they do. He will also know that every forecaster has been reducing inflation forecasts since the end of last year—they are all bringing down their forecasts of inflation for the future. At the moment we are plainly on course. Every recent forecast that I have seen stays well within the Government's inflation target, upon which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East declines to make any comment.

I have already dealt with the recent behaviour in the markets. It is true that, at first, our bonds fell further and our long-term rates went up somewhat higher than did the rest in western Europe. That is because of our country's history of high inflation, which goes back in particular to those irresponsible years when the Labour party was in office. Then, as I have cited, we were a byword for high inflation and poor economic performance. Our current policies are restoring confidence. We have a monetary policy; the Labour party does not. We are staying in power and we will ensure that our inflation targets are hit.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chancellor just answer the question? Why are long-term interest rates in Britain higher than they are in France and in Germany?

Mr. Clarke: They always have been since the war, but we are very much more in line with the rest of Europe than we have ever been before, and the confidence that this country will achieve sustained growth and low inflation is very much higher than it has been for a generation. A return to a Government of the Labour party and a move to the Treasury by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, if that were ever seriously contemplated, would shatter the confidence that we have built up. I am quite sure that it would have an extremely adverse effect on bond markets, long-term interest rates and business confidence as well.

Low inflation is not an optional extra. We have achieved our present low inflation—well below the forecast that people were making this time last year and even at the time of the Budget—as a result of the disciplines of, first, the exchange rate mechanism but, secondly, the tight monetary framework which my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), so promptly put in place after we had been forced out of the exchange rate mechanism. Low inflation is the necessary condition for the sustained economic growth that the Government now wish to see as we approach the next century and beyond.

The Conservative party does not believe that there is a trade-off between growth and inflation, as so many Opposition Members still seem to believe. We shall not try to boost growth artificially by stoking up demand and thus jeopardising our inflation performance. We believe that sound public finances are necessary for sustained growth, which is why action had to be taken in the past two Budgets to improve public finances. Our borrowing was increasing by too much as a result of the prolonged recession, which was experienced, to varying degrees, by all western countries.

Every major country in the west must now tackle Government indebtedness. All the G7 and European Union countries are taking painful action to restore their public finances to order. I could almost claim that no other European Union member state has taken such decisive and effective action to reduce its fiscal deficit as this country has, but that may be unfair to my German colleagues, who are also taking rigorous action. Many countries that have not taken that action will have to do so.

Because we have acted so decisively, promptly and effectively, there is now high confidence in the British economy in both the business and financial worlds. When we debated the economy only 18 months ago, we all agreed that confidence was the missing factor needed for our recovery to take off. The following two necessarily tough Budgets were an important part of restoring the confidence that was so vital for recovery.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): If the economic indicators are as good as the Chancellor says, why does not he end the anguish for the poor and elderly by saying that he will not increase VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent? Will he make that statement now?

Mr. Clarke: I give the House a presentation on the fiscal prudence necessary to maintain confidence and keep the recovery going, and a Labour Member gets up and suggests that we should abandon one of the tax increases. A few moments ago, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) made a statement on housing policy, and rows of Labour Members agreed that there should be a massive increase in spending on public housing. The Labour party's lack of policy and its instinct to abandon sound fiscal policies and controls on public spending pose a great threat to the recovery.

Labour Members have the nerve to claim that taxes would somehow be lower under a Labour Government. That is preposterous, as history and their current behaviour demonstrate. Taxes would have to be increased to pay for the never-ending list of spending demands revealed by every exchange in this House; otherwise, public borrowing would rocket to unsustainable levels and high interest rates and inflation would return.

I do not understand why the Labour party has got into such a knot about this. The Labour movement is going through an identity crisis. Clearly, Labour is the party of high Government expenditure—higher than its opponents in the Conservative party. Members of the Labour and trade union movement believe that more state spending is required to solve many of the country's problems. Labour Members nodded in assent when my right hon. Friend the Member for Acton accused them of wanting to spend more on public housing only a few moments ago. If they no longer believe in socialism, surely they must still believe that they are the party of higher public spending.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman in a moment because he has the courage to agree with me.

To what has the Labour and trade union movement been reduced if it now cringes in shame at the suggestion that it wishes to increase public expenditure, compared with a Government whose Ministers served under Lady Thatcher? Of course a Labour Government would increase spending dramatically, but Labour Members are no longer prepared to say that they believe that. It would happen as a result of their negligence if they ever came to power. I give way to a man of principle.

Mr. Benn: Will the Chancellor deal with two questions about taxation: what is it for; and who pays it? Why should pensioners pay VAT to buy a Trident? Why should not better-off people pay more to provide for the education and health that the whole community needs?

Mr. Clarke: Of course we all accept that certain expenditure is necessary, and we have hugely increased expenditure on key public services like the national health service, education and social security, including a greatly increased take-up of improved benefits for the disabled. We have delivered all those policies. In the real world, however, a balance must be struck between a sustainable level of growth in a successful enterprise economy, and the efficient delivery of public services. We are striking that balance. We can improve the quality of many aspects of people's lives while reducing the state's total take from gross domestic product to allow the private sector to flourish further.

That is not and never has been the Opposition's policy. When they were last in power, they took the state's take up to higher levels than we have ever taken it. Last week, we saw their reaction to defence expenditure, which was to say that it would be approached on the basis of how many public sector jobs it provides in the administrative back-up

[Mr. Clarke]

to forces, whereas we prefer to spend the money on the front line's kit, training and weaponry, while running our defence forces efficiently.

Our spending proposals are clear. Keeping public expenditure under control is the key to healthy public finances and lower taxes. Because we believe that lower taxes help incentives, we will lower taxes when the opportunity occurs—we will and we have—but only when it is prudent to do so. The Opposition's spending proposals would not do that—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members disagree, I wait to hear their spending proposals. Our public expenditure ceilings have just been agreed by the Cabinet. Are they too high or too low? I have no idea of the view of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. I hope that he will enlighten us.

The third pillar of our economic strategy is on-going reform to the supply side of the economy. Since 1979, we have put in place a raft of measures designed to improve the performance of our businesses and to attract business from abroad. Successful macro-economic policy gives us an opportunity to take that forward. Privatisation and private finance are key factors in the British economy's steadily improving performance.

When we started our privatisation programme, it was the most ambitious programme of its kind in the world, but privatisation is now the norm everywhere, except in the British Labour movement. Forty-seven companies have now been transferred from public to private ownership. We used to spend nearly £2 billion a year—£35 million a week—propping up those state-owned industries. They now contribute more than £2.5 billion a year—£50 million a week—in taxes to the Exchequer. The main difference is that they have changed beyond recognition. As corporate entities, they now provide better quality for their customers and many are now strong international companies.

Britain also has better industrial relations now than it has had in its industrial history. Co-operative attitudes between management and work force are better than I can remember in the history of British industry. We have achieved all that by sweeping away many of the legalised institutional divisions between what people on the continent still call "the two sides of industry", which many would like to reintroduce in the name of the European social chapter. As a result of our reforms, industrial stoppages are now at their lowest level since records began almost 100 years ago.

However, improved industrial relations are only one plank of our labour market reforms.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way later.

We fought in Europe, and we shall continue to do so, against the imposition of unnecessary labour market regulations, which impose additional costs on employers, and ultimately destroy jobs. We understand that job creation is the key to improving the fortunes of the low paid. Placing burdens on employers only prices the low paid out of work and creates more misery, not less.

Our approach to labour market flexibility—to deregulation of those markets—is being followed increasingly throughout the world. It was endorsed at the job summit in Detroit; it was endorsed at the recent Corfu summit in Europe; it runs all the way through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report that we recently discussed in Paris.

The Labour party is out of step. We have one of the most modern, flexible labour markets in the western world, and that is one of the principal reasons why we attract 40 per cent. of all the inward investment into the European Union, and why we continue to be such an attractive place for investment to create new jobs.

Mr. Wolfson *rose—*

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wolfson: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend, and I am delighted that he has emphasised the improvement in industrial relations. Does he agree that one of the things that that has achieved is that it has enabled our managers to concentrate on production and marketing, rather than on dealing with the bush fires that absorbed so much of their useful time in the past?

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree. It was a feature of management of any major company—private or public—in this country in the 1960s and 1970s, that most of the time of the most senior management was taken up with industrial relations problems, whereas now it hardly features at that level in the crucial decision-making in most of our companies.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) that unemployment will be, and should be, the major preoccupation of economic policy-makers in the 1990s in the western world. However, it is a combination of sound macro-economic policy, sustained growth, low inflation and supply side policies that create flexible labour markets, improved training and education—I could address the House at length about what we have done there—and active labour market measures that keep unemployed people close to the world of employment, giving them the incentives to get into employment, giving them the support to do so, that will enable us to get ahead, and which are attracting so much international support.

Mr. Berry *rose—*

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I think I have taken quite a long time, with apologies to my hon. Friend, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The deregulation initiative will cut through a lot of the red tape and bureaucracy that burdens industries in this country; the private finance initiative is bringing private sector finance, management and expertise into the capital programmes of the public services; and the recently launched White Paper on competitiveness outlines several initiatives to improve the supply side of our economy.

That builds on what we have achieved since the Conservatives came to power. Since 1979, our manufacturing productivity growth has been the highest of the major European economies. We are closing the productivity gap. One recent study showed our manufacturing productivity to be greater than that in Japan. That was a National Institute report in its May "Economic Review", making comparisons on a per hour basis. A recent study by the German chamber of commerce showed that two thirds of German-owned factories in the United Kingdom achieved productivity levels at least as high as those of their

counterparts back home. That is why, as I have said, we attract so much of the global investment when it is seeking a base in the European Union.

The outlook for the British economy is continued growth and low inflation. It is the most favourable that the country has enjoyed since I first entered the House, almost 25 years ago. It is the result of the coherent economic policy that Conservative Governments have put into place over many years. Some of those policies were not popular at the time that they were introduced, but by sticking to our principles, the present Government have laid the foundations for lasting economic success. We will certainly fight to keep those foundations in place, and to ensure that they deliver the prosperity and the secure jobs that we require.

The public are still hesitant. Only for three months have they had consistent reports of good economic news. I share the public view that that must be sustained, not just for months, but for years ahead, so that sustained growth with low inflation means higher living standards, lower unemployment and more secure jobs. I believe that it is now in our gift to deliver that, and I do not believe that the Labour party has the slightest clue how to contribute to that. Its members merely watch it happen before their eyes, with no alternative policies of their own to put forward.

5.4 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'notes the publication of the Government's latest economic forecast and the continuing tax rises-including the two new taxes in the autumn-and cuts in public services forcing down the living standards of millions of people; calls on the Government to reconsider the plan of raising VAT to 17.5 per cent. on fuel; notes the Governor of the Bank of England's remark that interest rates may rise, so hitting homeowners, mortgage holders and investment yet again; and condemns the appallingly high level of unemployment under this Conservative Government and the absence of a long term economic strategy for Britain—itself essential to both the achievement of long-term high growth and the reduction of inflation—which tackles under-investment in people, industry and the social and economic fabric with a new industrial training and employment policy for the country.'.

For all the Chancellor of the Exchequer's complacency and self-satisfaction—perhaps because he hopes that he will retain his job in the reshuffle while all around him others are losing theirs—the reality for millions of people throughout the country is that living standards are falling; that poverty is once again on the increase; that public services are being cut; and that tax bills are increasing.

Increased poverty is accompanying tax increases, with VAT hitting people this spring; more tax increases in the winter with the two new taxes already announced; cuts in mortgage relief and personal allowances next spring; and tax increases throughout the next year and the year after that. The problem is that the tax increases that have dominated this year and will dominate next year are not, as people would want them to be, investments to build for the future; they are simply paying off the Government mistakes of the past.

The tragedy for Britain is that, as the Chancellor had to admit when pressed on the issue of long-term interest rates and when he came to the section of his speech dealing with high levels of unemployment, all the problems that brought about the last recession are apparent now. They are lack of investment in manufacturing, which is still 13 per cent. less than in 1979; excessive dividend payments, which the Government have yet to come up with any proposals to tackle; worsening manufacturing trade deficits, mysteriously increased in the summer statement from £6.5 billion to £8.5 billion this year; and skill and capacity shortages throughout the economy.

For skill shortages to exist when 2.6 million people are unemployed represents a complete failure of free market dogma, and it is the ultimate failure of leadership to cut the training and employment budget when there are millions of unemployed people in need of training and thousands of companies in need of trained people. All the problems—skills shortages, lack of investment, worsening trade deficits—that brought about the last recession are already apparent even at this stage of the economic cycle, and without the Government being prepared to take action.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman set out a catalogue of what he would call reasons for the recession. What about the United Kingdom's adherence to the exchange rate mechanism? The hon. Gentleman has been criticising the free market. The ERM had very little to do with the free market.

Mr. Brown: It was the failure of the Government's economic policies that drove us out of the exchange rate mechanism. As everybody—*[Interruption.]* As all Conservative Members understand—indeed, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury made a speech about it—the stop-go economics that were pursued by the Conservative Government throughout the 1980s are responsible for the fact that, every time the British economy grows, we run into problems of bringing in imports, pressures on inflation and pressures on interest rates, and we are incapable of achieving sufficient growth to keep unemployment down and improve our public services.

Mr. Jenkin *rose—*

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I give way to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin).

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. On the matter of long-term interest rates, what can he do to contribute to the stability in the financial markets? Will he publish an inflation target? Will he say how he will reduce Government borrowing? Will he say how he will control public expenditure? Or will he, as I suspect, say none of that, and carry on contributing to the instability with which we have to cope?

Mr. Brown: I do not see why I have to continue to listen to the hon. Member for Colchester, North. After all, he was the Member of Parliament who said to his constituency at the general election:

"Ten good reasons to vote Conservative: Low taxes".

That is what the hon. Gentleman said. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Jenkin *rose—*

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Brown: The hon. Member for Colchester, North is clearly not trying to catch your eye alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker; he is trying to catch the Prime Minister's eye in a succession of interventions. I may say that his chances of promotion after that intervention are rather less than they were before it.

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dickens: This is quite a straightforward question to which the nation is most anxious to know the answer: does the hon. Gentleman favour an increase in the top level of taxation? Yes or no would be quite acceptable.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is good at asking questions. In his election manifesto, he gave as the third reason for voting Conservative, "Taxes Down". Who will ever believe anything that he says again? Incidentally, in the same election manifesto, he said that whenever he stood up to speak, Members of Parliament rushed into the Chamber to hear him.

I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that there will be a fair taxation system under a Labour Government. We will end the practice under this Government that allows millionaires to end up paying no income tax because they use the allowance system—something that even the hon. Gentleman could not defend.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is replying with abuse to the perfectly sensible questions asked by my hon. Friends. He has expressed an interest in taking this country back into the ERM. It is therefore perfectly sensible of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) to ask him what his inflation target is. Does he have one? Is the Government's too high or too low? What is his view of public spending? Is it too high or too low? What is his view of the monetary framework? Does he agree with it or does he have a framework of his own? The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with light-weight stuff and not answer fundamental questions.

Mr. Brown: The first person to whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman should address those questions is the Chief Secretary, with whom he is in fundamental disagreement over economic policy. Should anybody believe what the Chancellor says? In his election manifesto he said:

"Only the Conservatives believe in keeping taxation down. Only the Conservatives will keep the country's finances on a sound footing."

Who will believe him when this country has a £50 billion borrowing requirement?

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Before the hon. Gentleman becomes too cavalier and entertaining with the truth, will he take his mind back to a point that he made at the beginning of his speech—something that he said rather hurriedly? He claimed that real personal disposable income was falling. If he had read the background document to the debate, he would know from paragraph 1.26 that in fact it is rising by 1 per cent. this year and is forecast to rise by 2.5 per cent. next year. Would he kindly get his facts right?

Mr. Brown: The fact is that the majority of taxpayers will be hit by an average £500 tax increase as a result of the Government's policies. Millions of people will find that their wages are held back and their living standards will fall because of the Chancellor's economic policy. The hon. Gentleman may think that he can deny that, but he should have listened to his constituents during the local and European elections because they said that they were not prepared to accept that.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): When the hon. Gentleman looks at long-term interest rates, does it ever occur to him that the closer we get to a general election, the closer seems to be the correlation between long-term interest rates and levels of support for the Labour party in the opinion polls?

Mr. Brown: I shall refresh the minds of hon. Members on what the hon. Gentleman said in his election manifesto — *[Interruption.]* The country deserves to be reminded of what he said at the general election, which was:

"Reduced taxation gives choice and provides the vital boost our economy needs."

What is the boost to the economy from the biggest tax rises in history? Perhaps that is why no one took the hon. Gentleman seriously when he said:

"Everyone knows someone who has been helped by John Butterfill."

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): The hon. Gentleman is fond of quoting other people. Would he like to quote one of his own prognostications on the economy? On 17 March last year, just before the Budget, he said that he had only one Budget forecast—that unemployment would rise this month, next month and for months thereafter. Since that time, unemployment has fallen by no less than 250,000. Was his forecast just incompetence or are his economic policies divorced from reality?

Mr. Brown: I remind the hon. Gentleman that I was quoting the Government's Budget forecast of what would happen to unemployment— *[Interruption.]* Yes, I was. I was quoting the Budget forecast in the Red Book, which I shall be happy to quote again any time the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise the matter with me. I ask him one question: if things are so good, why do the latest unemployment figures show 73,000 fewer people in employment in the first three months of this year? Why, during the past six months, have there been more than 100,000 fewer people in the working population? Does not that make the hon. Gentleman think that he should look rather more carefully at the figures that he is given by the Government?

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I shall give way just once more and then I must get on with my speech.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman's policy is one of full employment. What minimum wage rate is consistent with his concept of full employment?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman cannot have studied the research done in both Europe and America. The research from America shows that a minimum wage can actually help employment prospects in the economy. A minimum wage makes firms more efficient. It means that there is less turnover of labour. Indeed, the American Labour Secretary—the Chancellor would be well advised to listen to him rather than simply suggesting that the policies pursued in America are hostile to those pursued in Britain—is considering raising the minimum wage, so confident is he about the employment prospects created by doing so.

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I am sure that hon. Members will agree that I have been generous in giving way. I have given

Conservative Members a chance to put across their wares in advance of the reshuffle. I have given them an opportunity to sell themselves to the Prime Minister. The fact that they have failed to do so is no fault of mine.

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Brown: No—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way".] AS HON. MEMBERS ARE SO INSISTENT, I SHALL GIVE WAY.

Mr. Budgen: Would the hon. Gentleman be good enough to answer one question in an untrivial way? What would an incoming Labour Government do about the ERM? Do they intend to go back into it as quickly as possible?

Mr. Brown: The difference between the Conservative party and the Labour party—

Mr. Budgen: Answer the question.

Mr. Brown: I am answering the question. Of course, it is one that the hon. Gentleman should ask the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary, who hold completely different views.

The difference between the Conservative party and ourselves is that we believe in the principle of managed exchange rates. We do not see any virtue in a free-floating exchange rate with speculative forces being left to decide the fate of the economy. As for our eventual policy on the ERM, we have always proposed necessary changes to its operation. There needs to be a far better means of dealing with the problems of speculation; a regional industrial policy throughout Europe; joining at the right rate; and a growth policy pursued by the European Community. That is completely different from the policy pursued by the Conservative Government, to the detriment of the British economy.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I am aware that many hon. Members want to speak. I have been generous in giving way, to Conservative Members.

Mr. Taylor: Give way.

Mr. Brown: Is the hon. Gentleman simply trying to interrupt my speech? I have given way, and if he was too slow in getting up to make his point, that is his own fault.

At the heart of the debate is one central truth that the Chancellor has failed to acknowledge—that Britain's growth rate throughout the 1990s will average only 1.6 per cent., which is lower than in the first 15 years of Conservative government. It will be Europe's lowest, with the exception of Turkey and Greece. We have a long-term growth rate that is just half what we achieved in the 30 years after the war.

If the test of the success of Conservative policies that the Chancellor tried to promote in his speech is to be met, there would have to be a far higher sustainable growth rate over the longer term than the right hon. and learned Gentleman's policies will produce.

I shall argue that the Government's policies are not only inefficient but unfair—that the Government are not only incompetent but unjust. They have done nothing to rectify the huge investment, technology and skills gaps in our capacity, which caused the last recession and will undoubtedly cause the next. They are the Government of unfairness and injustice.

Not only is the gap between those at the top and those at the bottom growing substantially, and faster, than at any time this century; not only have the bottom 10 per cent. in our country seen, according to the Government's own statistics, a fall in their living standards; not only are 4 million children in our country, according to figures issued last week, condemned to poverty under this Government: the whole burden of sacrifice under the Government's policies is being borne by low-income and middle-income Britain—those least able to afford it.

The Government have already shamefully misled the blind, the deaf and the handicapped over the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. The target for further savings—and I appeal to the Chancellor— should not be the poor and their housing benefit, the unemployed and their mortgage relief, or those injured or disabled at work who are to lose Government help with industrial injury benefit. It should be the tax loopholes, the anomalies, the evasions and the avoidances that the Government have tolerated over the past 15 years.

If the Chancellor wants to take a measure of his competence in economic policy, let him re-read what he said in the Budget statement only a few months ago—that the test of the credibility of his framework on economic monetary policy would be what would happen to long-term interest rates, which were at their lowest for 25 years.

Within a few weeks of his making that statement, long-term interest rates had risen by 22 per cent. They are 4 per cent. in Japan and 6 per cent. in America but 8 per cent. in Britain. If the Chancellor has decided that his credibility comes from low long-term interest rates, as he told us in the Budget, where is his credibility now that our long-term interest rates are just about the highest in Europe? The Chancellor is condemned by his own words, and he is never to be trusted begin.

Of course, credibility and consistency was never the Chancellor's strongest suit. Let us remember what he said at the election:

"Great cuts in public spending on the vital services or higher rates of personal taxation, that is not necessary."

There was a cut of some 50,000 in the civil service last week; there have been tax rises, which he himself estimates are the equivalent of 7p in the pound; and despite all his promises, there have been the biggest cuts in public spending for years.

The Government promised in their election manifesto that they would increase transport spending. They are now cutting it by 24 per cent. in real terms. They promised that they would

"continue to increase police numbers"

and wage a war on drugs, but are freezing police numbers, axing drug strategy teams, cutting Home Office spending by £70 million a year and betraying the law-abiding citizen.

The Government said that their commitment to the environment was not to be doubted, yet they cut environmental spending by 18 per cent. They said that the railways could play a bigger part in responding to Britain's growing transport needs, yet they cut the external financing limit by 20 per cent.

Perhaps the biggest humiliation of all is the channel tunnel, which will operate from September. But the channel tunnel rail link was first announced in 1987, reannounced in 1989 and repromised in 1991. While the French now have their rail link open, ours has not even begun. It is not even at the planning stage. It is not even a

[Mr. Brown]

route. There is not even the legislation to make it happen. The best chance that we have of completing it is not this century but the next, in 2003.

As President Mitterrand said, the channel tunnel opens up two worlds of travel: high-speed rail from Paris to Calais at 200 mph, then a chance to have a leisurely look at the English countryside. Now we know what the Prime Minister means when he talks about a multi-speed and multi-track Europe—not the wrong kind of leaves on the track, but the wrong kind of Government in office. That is the problem.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West) *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way any more.

What does the Prime Minister say to all that? I happened to hear from journalists what he was telling the 1922 Committee at its usual rallying meeting for the summer. It was a speech that even had the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), the potential rival in a leadership contest, saying that it merited a stay of execution. There is no question—for the moment at least—of the Prime Minister having to close the stable door after the stalking horse has bolted, because the stalking horse is in the stable for now. But it might still get angry and break the door down.

What did the Prime Minister say in a few trenchant phrases, each one characteristically hitting the nail firmly on the thumb? He said that much of the past two years have been memorable for the wrong reasons. He said:

"We have missed a few tricks in recent months and years. Our message has been too diffuse. We need to concentrate better."

"Missed a few tricks," he said: Iraqi guns, Pergau dam, Asil Nadir, BCCI, tax rises, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, Post Office privatisation, "back to basics", black Wednesday, the small matter of a few parliamentary questions. Or is he thinking of other disasters that have not yet come to light? I think that

"Our message has been too diffuse"

is a euphemism for virtual civil war in the Conservative party. I think that

"We need to concentrate better"

is probably a reference to fewer consultancies, no more inscribed gold watches, more time in research—less time with one's researchers—tabling more parliamentary questions, but only for constituents, and free at the point of delivery.

As the Prime Minister said, the message needs to be repeated and repeated so that when people hear the word "Conservative" they know what his party stands for and why. I have a message for the Prime Minister. The message has got across. The country knows only too well what Conservatives stand for, they know why, and they know what they want to do with them.

So what does the Prime Minister do now? Is there to be a shift in policy after the disasters of their European campaign, which started badly then fell away? Not a change in direction; heavens no! That would involve a choice of direction on the part of the Prime Minister. What we have is the ritual annual reshuffle, where the choice of talent is so limited that even the Secretary of State for the Environment looks secure and passes, in these sorry times, for a safe pair of hands.

It is a reshuffle in which not even the President of the Board of Trade, only Lord Archer, wants to be Conservative party chairman—in which nobody wants the only man who wants the job that nobody wants. I feel sorry for Lord Archer. He is the victim of a new and strange discrimination, for when has the talent for fiction and the knowledge of the wilder shores of finance ever been a disqualification for the post of Conservative party chairman? It is a reshuffle that brings the Chancellor a huge dilemma, which he must be turning over in his mind as he sits next to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I shall wait. I have a question for the Chancellor at the end.

What is the consequence of the Chancellor driving the last monetarist out of the Treasury temple? Would he prefer to see him as a departmental head, in a stronger position, ready to take him on for the eventual succession? Or would he rather keep him where he is, to keep an eye on him and what he is doing? The Chief Secretary—the last standard bearer of the new right inside the Treasury; the ghost of monetarism past; the still, small voice of Thatcherism; the insistent, insidious, whispering voice of the new right's agenda, for ever one pace behind the Chancellor wherever he goes, hissing his own message behind his back. Would the Chancellor prefer him inside the Treasury hissing out, or outside the Treasury hissing in?

The Government can change Ministers, the Cabinet, the Conservative party chairman, the presentation, the front men and the ad men, but those changes will add up to nothing, because the Prime Minister is incapable of giving this country the change of direction and strategy that it needs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The debate began with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) suggesting that we should have two days of economic debate, because we had not discussed the economy since November. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) went through the motions of pretending that he had been champing at the bit to talk about the British economy since Christmas. He spent 10 minutes not talking about the subject at all. Our monetary policy is clear. Can we take it that he has confirmed this afternoon that he has no views on the British economy, no economic policy, and no interest in debating the subject at all?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Brown: I will give hon. Members an answer. What this country needs is a long-term strategy for the renewal and rebuilding of the economy. That strategy involves rebuilding the capacity of the British economy. That demands four things.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): How?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Lady asks how. I am about to tell her. The first of the four is investment in people and employment opportunity. That is why Conservative Members should accept Labour's proposal for a university for industry as one of a number of measures for the training revolution. Secondly, the strategy involves solving the long-term problem of investment in industry. The Chancellor himself cannot be happy with a situation in

which, as he had to report in the spring statement, there are few signs of investment in business picking up in the way that it should.

We must consider three measures to solve the problem of business investment. The first is action to reduce the cost of capital for small businesses. The second is to set up a regional development agency that will work with the banks and financial institutions in helping medium-sized businesses. The third is long-term investment agreements that will enable financial institutions and industrial companies to make decisions on a long-term basis instead of being forced to respond to the short-term speculative needs of the City.

The third thing—

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: Conservative Members ask me to set out the guidelines of the policy and then try to interrupt. They do not like what they are hearing because it is what they should have done long ago.

The third thing that the strategy involves is solving the problems of low investment in our social and economic fabric, as instanced by the failure not only to build the channel tunnel rail link but to deal with the problems of the London underground and the train system up and down the country. That is why our task force for private-public partnership takes the issue far beyond what any Treasury Minister is prepared to contemplate.

Lastly, we need action in Europe as a whole to keep interest rates down and co-ordinate measures for growth and investment. Our economic agenda for Britain, unlike the Government's, is an agenda for fairness and opportunity for millions of people. Our fairness agenda is about employment opportunity. It is about an emergency employment programme to get people back to work and end the self-satisfied complacency of a Chancellor who talks about action and then refuses to take the action that is necessary. It is about increasing people's earning power by giving them the skills to enable them to get the best job that they are capable of doing.

Our fairness agenda is about rebuilding the welfare state so that people have the financial independence that is necessary, particularly to women, who can be given the opportunity to work if they are provided with child care. It is about tackling vested interests—entrenched private interests in our community such as banks, financial institutions and the privatised utilities, which often overcharge people for excess profits that cannot be justified. It is about a system of progressive taxation. It is about opportunity for millions that the Government have had 15 years to offer and have failed to give the people of Britain.

When we come to this debate in the House, it is right that we should put the Government on trial. The question that people are asking throughout the country is why the Government have failed in their election promises—why they have failed to offer the prosperity that they promised would come the day after the election was over.

I shall deal now with the specific matter of Conservative policy on the future of taxation. What is the Chancellor's policy for tax cutting, as he calls it? The average family is paying £500 more in taxes—the biggest tax rise in history. After all the evidence of tax rises, does the Chancellor admit that he misled and betrayed people? Does he apologise? Does he confess the mistakes he made? Will he try to do better?

No longer able to say that they are cutting tax; no longer even promising to cut tax and with no record in achieving cuts in tax—taxation is higher now than it was when Labour left office—with no specific Budget proposals to cut tax; and with the Chancellor unable even to repeat the promise that he used to make that the Conservative party was a low-tax party in the medium term, what do the Conservatives say now? All they can say is that they have an instinct for low taxes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman asked me a question. He quoted me saying things at the election that were remarkably similar to what I said in my speech today. Of course we will cut taxation, but the key is to get public spending and borrowing under control. The hon. Gentleman shows no sign that he recognises that. Which taxes would he cut? What would he spend while he was cutting taxes? He comes out with a lot of waffle that might have beaten the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in the leadership contest but would not beat anyone else in terms of content of economic policies.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor is now trying to rewrite history. He tries to give the impression that he went to the electorate saying that taxes would go up and then he might bring them down. He actually said:

"Only the Conservatives believe in keeping taxation down. Only the Conservatives will keep the country's finances on a sound footing."

What happened after that? We had the highest public sector borrowing requirement in Britain's history. The Chancellor knows very well that he should apologise to the electorate, admit the mistakes that he made and say that the Government will try to do better. The Chancellor cannot say those things, because he is personally committed to raising VAT.

I have always wondered about the Chancellor's vote in favour of VAT on children's clothes. I have always wondered about the Walden interview in which he said that it would have been far better to put VAT at 17.5 per cent. on fuel in the first year rather than waiting and imposing it at 8 per cent. in the first year. I have always wondered about that strange by-election statement a few months ago in which he said that not to impose VAT on food and fuel was anomalous. Now I know why.

Last summer one of the Chancellor's constituents wrote to him to ask his views on VAT on fuel. The constituent has kindly sent me the letter. In the long letter—the Chancellor tends to elaborate where it is sometimes unnecessary or inadvisable—he said:

"I have always thought that we exempt too many goods and services from VAT in this country. . . . VAT is still imposed on little over half of all sales, which is much more restrictive than the sales tax in most other countries."

No wonder the Chancellor does not sound convincing when he talks about taxation. No wonder the Chancellor's instincts are regarded with suspicion. He does not want to lower taxation. He wants to extend VAT. The issue from now to the next election is whether he will honour or disown his stated commitment to the principle of extending VAT. I think that he will have an uncomfortable few months with the electorate in the run-up to the election.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In all the hours of research carried out by Labour headquarters, no one has ever found a quotation from me which is inconsistent with what I have been saying about VAT for years. I repeat that the Conservative party is the only party that believes in low taxation. We believe in achieving it by controlling public spending.

As the hon. Gentleman is making his speech, will he say what are his policies on taxation? If he would reduce taxation, which taxes would he reduce? What are his views on public spending? What are his views on the public spending targets that we have set? It is utterly pathetic to come out with constituency letters in which I merely state my long-stated and well-known view that, if we were starting again, we might have a lower rate of VAT and fewer exemptions. As he knows, that is not policy now. Does the hon. Gentleman have any policy at all on anything of current concern?

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor has made it clear that he is in favour of fewer exemptions on VAT. Will he now confirm for the benefit of the House that he is in favour in principle of extending VAT? Is it to food? Is it to transport? Is it to children's clothes? Is it to books and newspapers? This is a serious question. Is he in favour of extending VAT to those items?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman could find countless occasions on which I have said, as I have probably said ever since that vote 20 years ago which he always cites, that other countries have lower rates of VAT and fewer exemptions. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not to be taken as a statement of policy intention now. Will he please stop flannelling around in this Blair-like fashion and tell us his views on tax, public spending, borrowing, monetary policy or anything that has anything to do with the debate this afternoon?

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has created the context for many debates that we shall have during the next election campaign. He cannot tell us that he is against the principle of extending VAT to food, to children's clothes, to books and newspapers or to public transport. The record will show that he told the House that he believed that there were far too few exemptions in this country. If that is the case, the Chancellor will live to regret what he wrote to his constituent and what he has said this afternoon.

Ministers have recently discovered instincts not only for what they call low taxation, but, if the Chancellor's speech of last week is to be believed, for community, for social cohesion and for full employment. We are asked by the Secretary of State for Employment to believe that the Conservative party, which for 15 years has never had less than 1.5 million people unemployed, and under which 1 million young people are unemployed today, is somehow the party of full employment. Having told us for 15 years that Government could do nothing to affect the employment level in this country, the Conservative party now asks us to believe after 15 days that it is somehow the party of full employment. Having told us for 15 years that there is no such thing as society, it now asks to us believe that it is the party of social cohesion and community.

Even though there is evidence, which we heard about earlier this afternoon, that 135,000 people are homeless under this Government; even though there is evidence to show that 13 million people are on low incomes as a result of this Government's policies; even though all the evidence tells us that there is more poverty, worse poverty and worsening poverty, the Government refuse to do anything about it.

This is the dilemma for Conservative Members as they go away for the summer recess. They do not know whether to attack the Labour party for its support of social cohesion, community, collective action and full employment, or to attempt to occupy the territory themselves. They do not know whether to attack the Labour party for its goal of full employment, or, in the face of evidence, to try to claim it as their own.

I have some sympathy for Conservative Members. What are they to think? Do they cheer the new cry for full employment, or do they cheer the right wing when it says that full employment is not the responsibility of the Government? Do they wave their Order Papers at Ministers' appeals for community and collective action, or do they still wave their Order Papers when the right repeats that there is no such thing as society?

On Europe, do Conservative Members say, "Hear, hear" when the Chancellor supports the principle of economic and monetary union, or do they say "Hear, hear" when the Chief Secretary to the Treasury says that he opposes it? Do they applaud when the Chancellor champions a single currency, or when the Chief Secretary questions the very principle? On the welfare state, do they wave their Order Papers when the Chancellor says that he opposes more health charges and opting out of the basic state pension, or do they wave their Order Papers when the Chief Secretary says, "These are just some of the things that have got to be looked at"?

When they get to the Conservative party conference in the autumn—Conservative Members had better face up to this problem—do they rise for a standing ovation when the Chancellor says that he does not believe in the minimalist state, or do they give a standing ovation to the Chief Secretary and his No Turning Back group friends when they call for the minimalist state to be implemented? Do they get to their feet when the Chancellor says, as he has before, "I have always opposed vouchers," and when he admits that we still lag behind our competitors in education, or do they get to their feet for the Chief Secretary when his friends say that they favour vouchers and when he doubts whether so many graduates are needed?

Do they stand and cheer for some and sit on their hands for others? In the interests of party unity, does everyone receive a brief, crouching ovation, or do Conservative Members wait for instructions from the new chairman of the Conservative party, whoever may accept that job or from whatever faction he may come? Will the Prime Minister have to appoint two chairmen of the Conservative party to ensure that all factions are represented?

What about the Prime Minister in all this? His one constant desire is to appease whatever faction holds sway, presiding over a rabble of divided factions and appeasing the right. In Churchill's words, the Prime Minister is "resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful for impotence".
Bonar Law said on his leadership of the Conservative party that he was their leader and had to decide which faction to follow. That applies to the Prime Minister.

No amount of hypocrisy on social cohesion, full employment and community, no instincts for taxes, and no amount of papering over the cracks can save the

Conservative party from its ultimate destiny—Opposition. It is clear that the party which runs an economy with 2.5 million unemployed, which still cuts the number of people on training schemes and the training and employment budget year after year, and which then tries to pretend that it is the party of full employment, will never be seen by the electorate as anything other than the party of mass unemployment.

The party which pushed up taxes faster and higher than any other Government in history, which has imposed 20 tax rises in two years and which then tries to tell us that it is the party of competence in the running of the economy, will never again be trusted with government. The Conservative party is not only unfit to govern because of its record: it is never to be trusted because of its hypocrisy.

The party which has multiplied the number of people in poverty, which has widened the gap between rich and poor to the worst point this century, which has consigned 4 million children to poverty, which has done nothing and said nothing against the excesses that characterised the privatised board rooms in some of the affairs of the City, and which then tries to pose as the party of community and social cohesion, will be seen by the electorate for what it is: not the party of values but the party of sleaze. It can offer no direction, no strategy and no purpose to this country. It has failed, and it has compounded that failure by its hypocrisy over taxation and the community. For 15 years, its failure has diminished this country and its failure to go simply prolongs the agony. To end the failure, we must soon end the Government.

5.45 pm

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): That was a very noisy speech from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), but it told us damn all about Labour party policy. It told us a lot about the hon. Gentleman. It showed how frustrated he is not to be a participant in the leadership campaign, and it proved that we shall receive no answers from him during either the leadership or election campaigns. The hon. Gentleman is an ambitious young man. He puts me in mind of another Brown, George Brown. The hon. Gentleman's long-term economic strategy is very much an echo of George Brown's national plan and it is about as much use to the British economy.

I do not want to speak at length and I rise to draw attention to two matters that have not been covered in speeches or that are not directly covered in the motion or the amendment. The first involves the need, if the economy is to be successful, for the whole of Government to focus on all the issues that are in Britain's long-term interests. My first point is addressed as much to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence—who is not present—as to Treasury Ministers, who I hope will take note of what I say.

There can be no doubt about the importance of the defence industry to the United Kingdom economy and to the aerospace industry in particular. Since the end of the cold war, markets have become even more competitive, but the importance of the aerospace industry has not diminished. That makes it all the more important that national defence needs and national industry needs should be weighed together. It means that we should think even more carefully before committing ourselves to defence procurement programmes that run counter to long-term economic considerations.

The RAF's problem on the Hercules replacement is a case in point. The short-term argument may favour buying American. The long-term advantage must lie with a European solution. The American company Lockheed's campaign to sell its C-130Js to the RAF is not an altruistic one. Some of its advertising claims are so far-fetched that they sound almost desperate. Let us take an example from a newspaper that I am sure you study, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the *Evening Standard*. Last Thursday, an advertisement boasted that the

"C-130J carries all military equipment required to be air transported for the British Armed Forces."

Anyone who knows what the requirements of the British armed forces are likely to be knows that that statement is a gross exaggeration.

Lockheed says that the C-130J means £7 billion in revenue for UK companies and

"re-affirms UK leadership in key aerospace technologies".

One might calculate that the Hercules C-130J would bring us £7 billion if one believed that every one of the 2,100 Hercules flying all over the world would be replaced by a C-130J, but all hon. Members know that that is hardly likely to happen. As for reaffirming key technologies— a phrase that means nothing to me in English; it may mean something in American, but we are not told what— the C-130J has nothing significant in the way of air-frame innovation about it.

The House must remember that an alternative is on the horizon—the future large aircraft, or FLA, which is a European joint venture. It really would meet our defence needs in the next century and would bring great benefits to our industry and our whole economy. It is important that we should weigh that in our minds when that decision is made.

Where do the true interests of our economy lie when such a decision is made? Can defence factors alone, especially when we remember that future British operations are most likely to be as part of a joint or allied United Nations force, outweigh the country's long-term economic interests? In this case, and no doubt in others, I am sure that economic considerations must come first and that the British economy cannot remain strong, whatever the broad sweep of policy, unless such considerations are borne in mind. We cannot fight Britain's corner, and we cannot have a healthy economy, if we reduce ourselves to the status of sub-contractors to the American defence industry, at the cost of destroying our own.

My second point is about another area where urgent Government action is needed—the threat to various sectors of our industry from state aids given by other European Governments to their own inefficient and uncompetitive industries. I could cite the steel industry as a case in point, where our interests are threatened by state aids to state-owned European companies. I could cite the airline industry, where Air France is a notorious example of a bankrupt operation being propped up by the French taxpayer at the expense of competition from airlines such as ours, where private enterprise and private investment rule the day. Instead, I want to focus briefly on a different industry—the aluminium industry, which is an important feature of our economy.

The British aluminium industry faces over-supply in a fiercely competitive market, for two reasons: imports of aluminium from the Commonwealth of Independent States following the collapse of internal demand and the activities of several loss-making state-owned companies, principally

[Sir Cranley Onslow]

in Austria, Spain, Italy and France. All those companies have severe trading losses, coupled with an outflow of funds. AMAG—Austria Metal—recorded the country's largest-ever corporate loss on 14 July of £755 million, following what the company described as
"a catastrophic loss in 1993".
The company has apparently cost the Austrian taxpayer £15 billion in the past decade. However much all of us may welcome the probable accession of Austria to the European Union, it cannot make sense that we should tolerate such state subsidy to an industry that is being run so catastrophically.

Inespal of Spain lost £158 million in 1992, and suffered similar losses in 1991. The position has since worsened. Alumix of Italy lost £220 million before extraordinary items in 1992, and 1993 is not likely to show any improvement.

The aluminium interests of Pechiney of France, which is 80 per cent. state-controlled, recorded a loss before extraordinary and finance items of £35 million in 1993. Part of the state's share is invested in the nationalised Electricité de France, which granted concessionary power rates for Pechiney's Dunkirk smelter. That is a typical example of the state aids that continue within the framework of the EU, with Brussels apparently unable do anything to prevent it. It is vital for the British economy that the Government act to ensure fair competition and an end to distorting state aids.

Our aluminium industry is entirely in the private sector. It employs an estimated 40,000 people, and has a turnover of £3 billion. It is a strong exporter. In 1992, it exported goods to the value of £608 million; in 1993, the figure was £615 million. The industry has suffered badly in the recession, losing many thousands of jobs, and this, again, is a factor that must be borne in mind by a Government who want to see a strong economy with strong industries.

I make those points not to criticise Government policy; indeed, I wholly support it. I thought that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was quite restrained in his failure to quote the Governor of the Bank of England on the state of our economy. The Governor is on record as saying that never in his professional life of 30 years has he known a time when the conditions for sustained non-inflationary growth were more favourable in the British economy. That is due to the skill and persistence with which the Chancellor and his colleagues have pursued their policies. They have my full support, and they deserve that of the House.

5.54 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): If this debate is to be intelligible to people listening to it, or to those who might read it, it would be helpful if we tried to relate what is said here more directly to what is happening outside.

I do not believe that this is an incompetent Government. I have been in the House for 44 years. I think that the situation that confronts our people is exactly what the Government wanted. I shall come to the details of that —the applause that greets every statement, such as the Chancellor's statement and the statement on homelessness, proves it.

I do not think that they are an uncaring Government. That may surprise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but a Government who give such massive tax cuts to the rich must care for somebody. Clearly, they do not care for the majority, who have been loaded down with the highest increase in tax on the poorest people. I met a ticket collector on the train last weekend—I have known him for some time—who came from Aden and who lives in a house with five children and his mother. That household paid £8,000 a year in poll tax. It was a big house with a number of adults, but that was the figure he gave.

The point that I am putting to the House is that I do not believe that the Government have an economic strategy. I think that they have a political strategy, and everything that has happened is intelligible to me if I realise what that political strategy is. How could a Government who inherited the enormous revenues of the North sea have spent every penny on unemployment? I do not know whether hon. Members ask unemployed people what they did before—ships' captains, ships' engineers, tool makers, draughtsmen—but the other day I was driven in a minicab by a doctor.

We are the only country in the world that could have used the North sea oil revenues to de-industrialise instead of to re-equip, or to have allowed our social fabric to be destroyed. I am talking about the infrastructure, the state of our public services. To close the pits, with 1,000 years of coal under our territory, was not an economic act in favour of nuclear power, which costs three and a half times as much as coal, but an act of vengeance against the trade union movement.

The sale of the Rover Group to a widow in Bavaria who owns 66 per cent. of all BMW shares is regarded as a triumph. What logic is there in saying that it is wrong for Britain to own the Rover Group but all right for a widow in Bavaria to do so? It is a political strategy.

I am trying to explain as best I can, because I have been here many years and have seen many Governments in power, that I think that the policy of the Government is to reverse the balance of wealth and power back to where it was in Victorian times. There certainly was a different breed of Conservative after the war: Winston Churchill, after all, was an old liberal. Harold Macmillan wrote a book in 1938, "The Middle Way", for which he might now be expelled from the Labour party because of its radicalism.

What happened under the surface was the creation of a new breed of Conservatives—I do not want to attach them to the name of a particular Minister— who greatly resented the growth in the strength of labour, the growth in local government and the development of democracy because they believed that it created a welfare state that threatened their wealth and power.

In fairness, when the Government were elected, they made many statements along the lines that the unions and local government were too powerful and that the welfare state was too big. The Government have been determined to break that political advance and to reverse it and they have done that by various well-known methods. First, they have legislated to make effective trade unionism virtually illegal. Legal safeguards for trade unions in Britain are now less than those provided by the International Labour Organisation.

Trade unions cannot defend their members. They are forced to hold ballots before they take industrial action. However, there is no ballot in respect of capital. If the foreign owner of a British company wishes to close a factory for ever, he does not have to ballot anyone. If a trade union wishes to defend the wages and conditions in

a factory by way of industrial action for a single day, it must hold a ballot. The Government's action was deliberate.

Local authorities have been virtually destroyed. In addition to the terrible sight across the river of county hall with a Japanese flag flying over it and a sign saying, "Removal", the destruction of local government has been a conscious policy because local government had been a means by which people could band together to buy collectively what they could not afford individually in terms of housing, health and so on.

Unemployment is the Government's major policy. Unemployment is deliberate. That is why I did not say at the beginning of my remarks that the Government are incompetent. They know exactly what they are doing. Unemployment performs essential functions in a capitalist society.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I will give way in a moment after I have finished my point. I hope that we will not have a lot of knockabout.

Unemployment undermines the trade unions and it lowers wages. If one goes to an employer and says, "I can't live on that money," he will say, "Well, there are 2 million or 3 million people who will take your wage." There are people on disgracefully low wages in Britain today. People with no trade union protection are earning less than £2 an hour. Such wages are advertised.

Because unemployment lowers wages, it boosts profits. It also performs the very valuable function, from the point of view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of limiting imports. We do not see an unemployed person in a Honda car, with a camcorder, on his way to a holiday in Spain. Unemployment is a weapon.

Reference is made to days lost as a result of industrial disputes. I wonder whether the Chancellor has ever asked his economists to add up the number of days lost in industrial disputes and to compare it with days lost through unemployment. Every day we lose 3 million days through unemployment. Unemployment is a Government policy.

Homelessness is also a Government policy. Whenever one sees someone in a cardboard box, that is a warning: "Don't quarrel with your employer because if you do, and he sacks you, you will be dispossessed and made homeless as well." I listened to the statement about homelessness that was made earlier today. The homeless, like the beggars, are now the victims of that policy. Homelessness is the warning: "Don't cause trouble." When the Government say that they want to encourage home owners, they really mean home buyers. There is an enormous difference between a home buyer with a mortgage and a home owner who does not have one.

The dependency culture—which is a phrase that should be redefined—to which the Government are committed means that one is absolutely dependent on one's employer, and has to take the wages, conditions and short-term contracts that he offers because if one does not, one is likely to lose one's job and mortgage and be thrown out onto the street.

Mr. Brazier: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Benn: I will give way quickly, but I am making a serious point.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He said that unemployment fulfils certain purposes in a capitalist society and he went on to give some examples. What role does 23 per cent. unemployment fulfil in socialist Spain?

Mr. Benn: I am addressing the situation here. Felipe Gonzalez is not someone with whom I find myself in very close ideological contact. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury because Felipe Gonzalez follows the Chief Secretary's policies and was properly rejected by the Spanish electorate.

I hope that the House will listen to me. My point is that legislation, unemployment, homelessness and the erosion of democracy are Government policies. All the quangos that have been set up are designed to replace elected people. We heard much talk about giving the unions back to their members, but by God, when it came to the real centres of power, power was handed over to the quangos.To coin a phrase, Maastricht is the last quango in Paris. It is the last quango in Brussels. Maastricht is a huge unaccountable body with enormous power over us.

As I have said, I have been paid to watch the Conservative party for 44 years. I know what it is up to. What amazes me is why the rest of the people accept a policy that is so manifestly unfair and damaging to them and to the country. The answer is that the policy was put across with considerable skill, using language which misled people about what it was.

For example, we were told that the Government would reduce state power. I have never known a state so powerful as ours is now: there were some 10,000 policemen at Wapping, police were used in the miners' dispute, the police are controlling everyone, and huge MI5 and MI6 buildings are being constructed and used. State power has simply been transferred from attempting to protect the public against exploitation to protecting the people who support the Government against any challenge to their power.

I have referred to the word "customer" in the House on several occasions. To be a customer, one must have money. If one has no money, one cannot be a customer. The people in cardboard boxes are not customers. They desperately need houses, but they do not have the money to turn their need into a demand. Therefore, a word has been devised and injected into the citizens charter, which is all about depersonalising and dehumanising a huge and growing section of society—those who are so poor that they cannot get what they need.

I am afraid that the result of all that—this is where the politics comes into it—has been to widen the group of people who have totally rejected the philosophy of the 1980s. One could make the miners out to be unpopular if one had the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Express* on one's side. One could attack the print workers. However, the Government have now turned on the public servants.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is making a great mistake if he thinks that civil servants and local government workers believe that market testing has anything to do with efficiency. Not only has a huge layer of bureaucracy been set up to carry out that artificial market testing, but if better value for money is achieved, it is on

[Mr. Benn]

the basis of lower wages and poorer conditions for those performing the services, and rocketing incomes for the managers who favour privatisation because that is how they double, treble and quadruple their incomes.

We should not underestimate what the Government have done to the prison service. I went across to Westminster Central hall the other day with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who received a standing ovation from the prison officers. He asked me afterwards what he had said wrong. I told him, "You said nothing wrong, Dennis. You spoke of the prisons as a public service."

We should not think that the police are not concerned. When I was at the Durham miners' gala 10 days ago, a sergeant said to me, "Mr. Benn, 10 years ago I thought you were dangerous. Now I agree with everything you say." The police are also being attacked. I welcome them on the picket line now because I say, "Next year it'll be Group 4 Security and you will be on our side." The police know that that is the case.

I believe that there is a widespread rejection of the Government's policy. Although we tend to speak in the House in economic debates in the jargon of economics, most people know what it is all about. It is about the return to Victorian conditions when the country was run by a handful of wealthy and powerful people and the rest of the people were on the floor.

Mr. Wolfson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: No, I will not give way. I am making a point. I hope that hon. Members will listen because I want to keep within the 10-minute limit, although we have not yet reached 7 pm.

The answer to all this is repression. The Government introduced the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill because they know that they are sitting on an explosive situation. Therefore, the police are to be used to prevent matters from getting out of control.

As to the economy, the Chancellor controls nothing. In respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who I hope will soon succeed the Chancellor, the Chancellor made much of the point that the economy is controlled by international capital. That is the way it was intended that it should be controlled. Capital has been wholly liberated to move where it likes, and labour and Parliament have been restricted.

I do not want to reopen the argument about the ERM, which I voted against when the Labour national executive met before the last election. Nor I do not want to raise the question of the central bank. However, if there is a central bank—my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has often pointed this out—a future Chancellor will have no power. Indeed, at the moment, if sterling drops three decimal points, the Secretary of State for Health pops up and closes three hospitals and confidence is restored.

It is a facade to pretend that the Chancellor is running the economy. The Chancellor is responding to forces that he has helped to liberate because he himself does not really believe that an elected Chancellor should have any control over the world economy. We can add to that GATT and the World Trade Organisation, a wholly undemocratic body accountable to nobody, which will have the power to force nations which sign GATT to abandon certain environmental protections and other matters because they interfere with free trade. GATT and the central bank are part of that mechanism, and little scope for action is left.

I hope and believe that, with the new Leader of the Labour party, whoever he or she might be, on Thursday, and with the new Government after the next election, we shall adopt totally different objectives. Governments should be judged by their objectives and not by their techniques, playing a game that they do not control. Everybody in Britain should have useful work available at a living wage throughout their lives. That should be an objective of policy.

When I was 17, the then Government had a marvellous employment policy. When one was 17, one received a very nice letter from the Government, saying, "Will you turn up on your birthday? You will receive free clothes, free accommodation, free food and free training. All that you have to do is to kill Germans." They had a lovely youth training scheme in Germany, too. The Germans were asked, "Will you join the German army? You will receive free accommodation, free food, free clothes and free training if you will kill the British."

If we can do that in wartime for destructive purposes, nobody will persuade me that we cannot have full employment in peacetime, to build the infrastructure, to clean the rivers, to print schoolbooks, to reduce the size of classes and so on—of course we can, but it is not profitable to do it, and that is why it is not done.

People are entitled to a home. Why should there be a rat race between the really homeless and the temporarily homeless for a little bit of housing? We should build houses—there are 500,000 building workers. What I have discovered is that it is so long since the case for socialism was made that people have forgotten the argument against it. When I say, "There are 500,000 building workers, so why do we not use them?" people say, "What a marvellous idea. What is the reason? There must be some reason." Of course they have forgotten the reason because that case has not been put, but, if it is put, it will have enormous political support.

People are entitled to lifelong education. I am for raising the school leaving age to 95—I always have been. When I first spoke in favour of raising the school leaving age to 90, I had a letter from a pensioner from Liverpool who said, "I have just received an Open university degree at 92. Tony, will you raise the school leaving age?" Education should be alongside one throughout one's life. One goes into education just as one goes into a library to learn what one wants, when one wants, and comes out when one has learned it. That is education, not stuffing people like turkeys to get into selective schools to obtain better jobs.

People are entitled to health care that is free at the point of use. We have never had a free health service. Aneurin Bevan did not introduce a free health service. He introduced a health service that was free when one needed it and which one paid for when one was well. For those who are doubtful about socialism, it was the most socialist and most popular thing we ever did, and we had the resources to do it.

People should have dignity when they retire. I say "dignity" rather than "a quiet life" because many old people have much to offer. We should spend less on the means of war and more on the means of life. Hon. Members do not comment that the Japanese and Germans are so strong because they make civil goods. We can sell

a few missiles to a sheikh, while the Germans and Japanese pour out civil production, but we have to plan if we are to do that, just as at the end of world war 2 Beaufighters stopped coming out of the Bristol Aircraft Corporation in Bristol, and about six weeks later prefabricated houses started to be built. That had to be planned; it did not happen as a result of market forces. I am in favour of an incoming Government committing themselves to such matters.

Do not tell us that public expenditure is evil, because we dealt with unemployment by public expenditure before the war. We took people off the dole and put them into factories producing tanks, guns and ships. They did not receive dole money: they received wages, and they paid tax and paid for the war. There were no market forces. My granny never bought a Spitfire. I never saw a tank in the back garden. My auntie never had a sten gun. The Government bought those things. If we can do that for defence, we can do it for civil and manufacturing reconstruction.

The one absolutely basic national interest in this country is that one should be able to earn a living—that applies to farmers but not to manufacturing industry—and pay fair taxation. I do not know why people are so worried about our tax argument; I mentioned it in an intervention on the Chancellor.

There are only two questions about taxation: what is it for and who pays? If the Government tax a pensioner VAT on fuel, even on his standing charge, and use it for a Trident, that is mad. I go around Chesterfield, where a family of four pays £32 a week on weapons before they have paid the rent. I ask, "Aren't you spending a bit too much on weapons?" They say, "No, we're not." I say, "Oh yes, here is your share." Do they feel more threatened by vandalism due to unemployed lads on their housing estates or by a nuclear attack by Kim Il Sung's son in North Korea?

The balance is absolutely wrong. If we put forward the argument with credibility and conviction, there will be enormous support for it, and I hope that it is noticed where the voices are louder than mine. If we are to do that, we must have more democracy and we must seek the powers to do so.

I do not know how the next Labour Government will cope with the Brussels Commission. However, I do know that my right hon. Friend for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who I gather has moved to an office of profit in the Commission —whether it involves his immediate resignation is a matter for the Clerks, not for me—will tell us that we cannot take action to deal with those matters because that would involve interfering with market forces. That is what Maastricht is all about.

Therefore, when we present the argument—I shall have to do so in Chesterfield, if I am reselected, which I hope I am—there must be an element of truth about it. We can talk about objectives, but, as old Clem Attlee used to say, and it was in our 1945 manifesto, the test is not one's aspirations but rather whether one has a workmanlike plan for dealing with the matter.

A workmanlike plan for dealing with unemployment, which would be the greatest thing that we could do for this country, for men and women and for old and young, would involve intervening in the economy to prevent our future being handed over to the speculators and the gamblers who now control it. The people listening to the debate might be more interested to hear that issue discussed, rather than to hear the exchange of quotations, of which many are to be found in *Hansard*.

It will be terribly difficult to return to full employment in a technological age. We shall not do it by raising the school leaving age, and we shall certainly not do it by raising the retirement age for women by five years. We must have, perhaps, a shorter working week and we must make all sorts of changes, but people want to know how it will be done, because their vote and support will be determined by that rather than by the false idea that somehow in this House we can so manipulate the world economy as to create the conditions that we want.

We live under the control of international capital and, until that is in some way discussed, challenged and altered, our discussions may be no more relevant than municipal discussions when a council is faced with a standard spending assessment imposed by the Department of the Environment.

6.17 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): It is always a pleasure to hear the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). If time allows, I should like to answer many of his points, but there is one matter about which I am deeply concerned, so I shall concentrate my remarks on that.

I greatly enjoyed the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not least because the summer forecast contains much good news and provides a firm basis for further progress. However, I am bound to say that my enjoyment was tinged by the old adage, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." I think that I am right in saying that my right hon. and learned Friend has not spoken in a debate in the House since 9 December. I cannot, in only 30 years—not 40 years, like the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—remember an occasion when a Chancellor has gone so long without addressing the House. He has made many speeches outside, but he has not made a single speech in the House since then.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor rightly pointed out, we have had an enormous number of Supply days, none of which was devoted to the economy. Perhaps that is understandable, given the satisfactory general management of the economy that forms the background to today's debate; nevertheless, it is extraordinary that there has been no Opposition day debate on the economy for such a long time.

My right hon. and learned Friend suggested that the shadow Chancellor was not anxious to debate such matters. I had the impression that perhaps it was only every six months that he managed to cook up enough jokes to conceal the fact that he was not going to give any answers to questions about the Opposition's real policy on central issues of economic management—although, of course, we hear plenty of talk about peripheral matters.

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): What about VAT?

Sir Terence Higgins: As I was responsible for the original zero-rating of fuel, let me say a word about that. In practice, the taxing of fuel has proved to be an appalling socialist measure: we are now taxing the entire country's fuel, and redistributing almost half the money to the lowest paid and pensioners. I am surprised that Opposition Members have not cottoned on to that.

[Sir Terence Higgins]

What worries me is this. We have not heard from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in more than six months because we now have a so-called unified Budget. The question was debated for many years—for instance, by the Armstrong committee back in 1978, and by the Procedure Committee which I chaired in 1983. All were certain of one thing: if a unified Budget was to be introduced, the procedural aspects would have to be examined very carefully.

Before the last general election, a White Paper was finally produced. Its publication, however, was overlooked because of the election itself. The next thing we knew was my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) telling us, in his 1993 Budget speech, that there would be a unified Budget in the autumn.

I feel bound to say that, in procedural terms, the move was pretty disastrous. Because the procedural aspects had not been thought out properly, we had to guillotine two Bills on the same day. The Opposition—rightly, in my view—were very concerned. The usual channels broke down, the operation of Select Committees was inhibited and the general work of the House was disrupted. We must not let that happen again this year, but it is far from clear how we are to avoid it.

In particular, as a result of that change, opportunities to debate the most important area of policy—economic policy—have been seriously eroded.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Terence Higgins: No; I want to develop this point.

In recent years, the normal pattern has been for the autumn statement to take place—understandably—in the autumn, followed by debates on the White Paper just after Christmas and debates on Budget measures until this time of year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has appeared at various points in the sequence, and on each occasion has also appeared before the Treasury Select Committee. The introduction of a unified Budget has greatly reduced the amount of time available for the House to debate such matters, which has important implications in terms of accountability.

It is astonishing that the Opposition have not kicked up a row, but it is not just a question of what they think; it is a question of the House and its future. Sooner or later—in 20 years, perhaps—we shall change sides. We may suddenly find that there are very few occasions on which to debate the economy, with which the Conservative party has always been passionately concerned.

It is doubtful whether we should return to the old arrangement, although in some respects it might be better than what we have now. We must examine the possibilities carefully. The Government have saved a good deal of parliamentary time; in a sense, today's debate is a mere sop. I believe that we should keep the detailed debates that take place on estimates days, but that we should also have more time in which to debate Select Committee reports on expenditure, because Select Committees are responsible for examining the policy, administration and expenditure of their Departments.

Since we reformed the system 12 or 15 years ago, it has been very difficult for Select Committees to examine expenditure because of the form of the estimates. Following the reform of the estimates procedures, much of the data are now in the annual reports of the Departments: for the first time the Committees can really look at them, and for the first time the House has an opportunity to examine the expenditure of individual Departments in detail. I believe that the time that has been saved should be devoted to a number of days on which the expenditure details of the reports can be debated, on the basis of the Select Committee reports.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Terence Higgins: No. I am about to make a point that is related to what I have just said, and I do not want to interrupt the flow of my argument.

Ithough we are told that we have a unified Budget, in fact it is no such thing. In the autumn statement and Budget debates, we have always discussed both sides of the equation—public expenditure and taxation—and there has never been a problem. Now the two have been brought together. Last year, the amount of public expenditure detail that was presented at the time of the autumn Budget was not very great, and I doubt whether it will be this year either.

The unified Budget means that we now have far less time in which to debate public expenditure. We have lost the White Paper debates, which, although they were never very satisfactory, at least gave us some time in which to discuss that subject. We do not have a truly unified Budget, in the sense that a proposed increase or cut in public expenditure is balanced against a proposed increase or cut in taxation. The House, of course, is inhibited from proposing increases in either tax or expenditure—that is reserved for the Government—but, in a unified Budget, a trade-off between the two would be necessary.

It is also true, however, that there is no real unified Budget within Government. I suspect that the Secretary of State for Health, for example, does not go along to the Chancellor and say, "I must spend another £2 billion on the health service; please put 2p on income tax." It does not work in that way. As we know, there is an expenditure round which is debated bilaterally; it may be dealt with by a Committee, and, if the matter is in dispute, it may go to the Cabinet. The Chancellor then decides what to do about taxation.

I believe that it is very dangerous to take such action without considering the procedural aspects. I suggest that the estimates days should be retained for more expenditure debates, and that more of the time that has been saved should be devoted to debating Select Committee reports more generally.

One of the Chancellor's remarks gave me considerable cause for concern. He said that the policy of countries across Europe, and his own policy in particular, was to cut the deficits incurred during the recession; he implied that the right approach was to increase taxation, against the present level of unemployment. I think that that is rather a dangerous concept. We still do not know the extent to which our deficit is cyclical and the extent to which it is structural; but, unless the Chancellor was implying that there has been a huge increase in the structural deficit which he needs to cover by increasing taxation, I am very doubtful about his proposals. He is in danger of slowing down the recovery and affecting the balance in such matters. Even in 1995, the deficit is forecast to be about £28 billion and there will be some problems funding that.

The issues are complex and I do not have time to deal with them now. One passage in the Chancellor's speech contained a dangerous statement. It could have been an off-the-cuff remark, but if it was drafted in advance, it needs to be re-examined closely, perhaps by the Treasury Select Committee.

The introduction of the unified Budget has eroded the ability of the House to hold the Government to account and that is a dangerous state of affairs.

6.30 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I share the reforming zeal of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) and his desire to make the unified Budget what it should have been and what he intended it to be when he played his part in introducing some of the reforms. It should have been a process through which we would have more effective Budget-making, with tax and revenue reviewed together, and more accountability. That is not yet the result of the change and I very much agree with the right hon. Gentleman about that matter.

I can understand the Chancellor wanting to dwell on the good indications contained in the present economic figures, but that is no excuse for the staggering complacency of much of his speech. It was the equivalent of the Italian fans getting out the champagne bottles when the whistle blew and the score was still 0-0. In the case of the British economy, there is more than a penalty shoot-out still to come. To make matters worse, we know more than the Italians about what could go wrong in the next stage.

From experience and our knowledge of the British economy's weaknesses, we have a pretty fair understanding that the favourable signs that we have had so far will not, by themselves, see us through the next crucial stages of recovery from a very deep recession. We shall face severe pressures. It is a known fact that the United Kingdom economy has scarce capacity in transport, skills, housing and industrial investment and that those become pressure points when growth begins again.

Growth is apparently buoyant, which I welcome, and it has been less affected by the scale of the tax increases than I feared. That fact is a significant feature in the political debate—indeed, it qualifies what the right hon. Member for Worthing said concerning his fears about what would happen if the Chancellor relied too heavily on tax increases to deal with the continuing deficit next year. So far, the evidence shows that the tax increases have had less effect on growth in the economy than some of us might have expected.

Present growth is stimulated by consumption, however, and not investment, which is what many of us feared. The risk is that inflation will develop again. It is all very well to point to the statement in which the Governor of the Bank of England described the favourable features of the present economic situation. It would also be easy to point to his warnings that interest rates may have to rise if inflation starts to increase again.

The Chancellor has ratcheted taxes to an all-time high and now has the political objective of cutting them again. If growth restores public finance sufficiently to allow tax cuts, those very cuts may over-stimulate the economy. If it is prudent to cut taxes because revenues have been sufficiently boosted by growth, the Chancellor will face the danger that the sort of stimulation that Nigel Lawson was fond of giving the economy will have precisely the same effect again and the remedy will be interest rate rises.

The more the Chancellor's Back-Bench supporters talk about the possibility of tax cuts, the more they are likely to push interest rates up in the coming months. The markets will fear that fiscal policy will not take sufficient account of inflationary dangers and that monetary policy will have to do so.

Whichever way he turns, the Chancellor is caught. If the circumstances appear to be favourable for tax cuts—disregarding for the moment what we could and should be using taxes for—he may well find that he has to protect his back with interest rate rises. The price for political talk of tax cuts may well be further pressure for increased interest rates.

The real indictment of the Conservative Government goes much further than that. They allowed the recession to be longer and deeper than it need have been. The Chancellor keeps saying that Britain is leading Europe out of recession, but that clearly implies that Britain led Europe into recession. If being the first out is a mark of some virtue, being in so early, so long and so deep is a curious virtue for the Government to proclaim. The artificial boom that preceded Britain's recession—the work of Ministers in this Government—was the reason for the depth and length of our recession and for much of the hardship that it caused.

The Government will continue to pay the price for that in many parts of the country. My hon. Friends the Members for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) and for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock), who are sitting beside me, won their seats in Parliament partly because people were so angry about the way in which the Government had mismanaged the economy.

Mr. Wolfson: The right hon. Gentleman is arguing that the recession was unnecessarily long. With hindsight, does he think that the fact that we were members of the exchange rate mechanism for so long directly contributed to the depth of the recession?

Mr. Beith: No. I accept that our membership became unsustainable for a combination of reasons, some of which were related to the way in which British economic policy had been conducted and others to pressures outside the United Kingdom. I agree with the Chancellor that the fact that we were in the ERM for that length of time was fundamental in the battle against inflation. Had we not been in the ERM, inflation would have been far worse now. As the Chancellor pointed out, other mechanisms had to be put in place fairly quickly once we left the ERM. The exchange rate mechanism is not the best way to reach a single currency and when we eventually reach one it will be by a different mechanism, but that is a subject for another debate and another day.

One reason why we were so long coming out of recession was that the Government failed to invest in a counter-cyclical way during the depths of the recession, so the weaknesses with which we are all familiar persisted. In the latest report by the World Economic Forum, Britain came last out of all 22 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in the number of qualified engineers, in engineering sciences and in the quality of the work force, and second from last in the standard of compulsory education.

[Mr. Beith]

In the United Kingdom, 25 per cent. of the work force have vocational qualifications, compared with 40 per cent. in France and 63 per cent. in Germany. In 1991, 62 per cent. of 16-year-olds in Germany and 66 per cent. of 16-year-olds in France had the equivalent of a GCSE in three core subjects—mathematics, science and the national language—while only 27 per cent. had gained those qualifications in England. We were 19th out of the 22 OECD countries in real growth in total expenditure on research and development, 20th on public funding for research and development and 22nd on private funding of non-defence research and development. We came last out of the 22 OECD countries for investment in infrastructure. Despite all that, the Government plan to chop another 10 per cent. off their capital expenditure programme for 1994-95.

During the recession years, we could have been filling some of those gaps. We could have engaged in investment that would have put people back to work, reduced the burden on the welfare benefit system, brought through income in taxes paid and shortened the agony of recession, while equipping us for the future. It will become increasingly difficult to carry out some of that investment when Government activity on physical infrastructure, for example, starts to compete with intensified private activity in the economy. In economic terms, it would have been much easier to engage in that investment then.

We are paying for the lost years of recession, which have left us between 6 and 8 per cent. below trend growth. One could say that that amounts to a £50 billion bill for the years wasted in the depths of recession. Meanwhile, in a consumption-led recovery, public borrowing is financing a trade deficit—73 per cent. of national income is spent on personal consumption, which is higher than during the Lawson years. That is a remarkable fact, which illustrates the way in which our economy has become geared to personal consumption and has moved away from business investment. The Government are not putting in place measures to boost investment or small businesses.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that one implication of his critique of the policy during the recent recession is that, if his party had been influential in any way, it would have increased both public expenditure and public borrowing during those years over and above the levels which took place? Is that the case?

Mr. Beith: Yes, except for the last phrase. When the hon. Gentleman says "over and above the levels which took place", he ignores the effect of expenditure during a recession. One of the features of that which Keynes managed to convince people about, which no one has fundamentally denied since, is that expenditure taking place during a recession leads to economic activity and the payment of taxes; it reduces the payment of welfare benefits; and it could have increased the speed at which we got our public finances back to a sensible position.

A further criticism of the Government, in listing this indictment, is that they have at the same time forfeited our lead role in Europe to the detriment of London as a financial centre. The possibility of London being the centre for a European financial institution is destroyed by the opt-out position in which we have placed ourselves. We now have the Government in the absurd position of being willing to accept as President of the Commission someone about whom the best that can be said is that he is a federalist, but a less competent federalist than the last federalist whom they vetoed.

If there are any challenges to the competence of the proposed President—and I make none because I do not know whether there are any—they are extraordinary grounds on which to prefer him to another candidate. That is another illustration of a Government who, for the purposes of satisfying those on their own Back Benches who are in fundamental disagreement with their views, are prepared to take steps in Europe that are damaging to Britain's economic position.

One must add that the Government's tax policies have been deeply unfair as well as dishonest. They knew before the election that there would be a £28 billion public sector deficit, and they had the full opportunity to tell the nation if they thought that the only way to deal with that was by substantial tax increases—perhaps even not quite on the scale that they eventually turned out to be. We could have given them the credit for underestimating the scale of increases required. But there were not to be any tax increases—it was tax cuts that would be on the agenda at the moment the ballot boxes closed and the Conservative Government were returned. That was dishonest.

There has also been the unfairness of the tax policies. According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, the income of the richest 10 per cent. has increased by £30 a week as a result of tax changes in the past decade, while that of the poorest 10 per cent. has gone down £3 a week as a result of tax changes over the same decade.

It is a long charge sheet and the plea in mitigation will not get much off the sentence. The acceptable part of labour market reforms, the publishing of the minutes of the Governor's meetings with the Chancellor on monetary policy and the apparent toughness on inflation—I welcome all that, but it does not add up to much in comparison with the huge damage that has been done.

One is bound to ask, as did the Chancellor, especially this week: where would Labour take us? Are Labour Members really committed to economic stability and a fight against inflation? Will they act to encourage labour market flexibility? Will they ever get over their readiness to accept monopolies—a characteristic where I think they have too much in common with the Government—usually, in their case, in the public sector and, in the Government's case, in the private sector? The Government transfer monopolies from the public to the private sector with too great a willingness. Such questions will need to be answered in the coming weeks.

It is clear to us that certain crucial things still need to be done. We must improve our education system. We must invest in our infrastructure. We must promote research and development and small business. We must take a much tougher line on the effect of monopolies on our economy. We must take a lead in Europe. We must take wider measures than the Government have attempted to deal with long-term unemployment. We must invest in the people. They need long-term competitiveness, not another short-term boom with the inevitably deep collapse that would follow it.

6.43 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The three main economic objectives of any Conservative Government should be low inflation, sound public finance and reducing the overall burden of taxation. If any of those objectives conflict, clearly low inflation and sound public finance must take precedence over reducing taxation. The Government's record on inflation has been successful. Since 1990, inflation has reduced from 9.5 per cent. to 2.5 per cent. Looking at wage increases, factory gate prices and spare capacity, inflationary pressures are subdued.

As for public sector finances, while I would be the first to admit that the Government can be justifiably criticised for letting the Budget deficit rise so quickly and so high, they have now grasped the nettle and are courageously sticking to a policy which will broadly balance the Budget by the end of the decade. It is encouraging that recent forecasts show that the deficit is coming down more quickly. I strongly support the Government's policy of financial rectitude.

As a result of that success, the economy is growing, and unemployment is coming down. Despite the fact that long-term interest rates have risen slightly recently, the immediate prospects and, indeed, the medium prospects look favourable. But it is when we come to reducing the level of overall taxation that we see that the Government have not achieved their objectives; indeed, the opposite is the case.

Unless we are prepared to take some tough decisions, that will not be achieved in this Parliament. If we stick to the policies laid down in the Red Book, as the Chancellor said, the overall increase in the burden of taxation will be more than £16 billion in this Parliament, which is equivalent to 8p on the standard rate. To fight the next election with that scenario is not acceptable to me or to many of my colleagues on these Benches.

It is highly hypocritical of Labour Members to attack the Government for increasing taxation when, in every economic debate, they always want us to spend more. Whenever we suggest cuts in spending, they are opposed to them. They even criticised the defence review announced last week for being Treasury-led. That is hypocrisy.

We must ask ourselves how we got into that situation. In the autumn of 1992, after we were swept out of the exchange rate mechanism, it became clear that the deficit would rise by £1 billion a week, to some £50 billion in the ensuing financial year. At that time, the Government decided not to reduce spending, despite pressure from many of us on the Back-Bench finance committee suggesting that they should cut spending. At the same time, Labour was opposing any cuts in spending.

In the 1993 Budget, the Government decided that they had to deal with the deficit, but they were not yet prepared to cut spending. Once again, Labour opposed any cuts in spending, and demanded more spending. In the last Budget, I was delighted that the Government at last decided to cut spending, and we had the first reduction in my lifetime of the control totals. That was done by the strategy of not allowing Departments to spend the contingency reserve.

I welcome that start, and I congratulate the Chancellor on being the first to have the courage to grasp the nettle. However, he must be even tougher and concentrate on fulfilling our manifesto commitments, because we have seen from Labour today what we can expect if we do not do so.

That means that we will not be able to cut taxes before the next election unless we are prepared to make substantial cuts in public expenditure. At least an additional £5 billion should be cut from the existing control totals this year, and another £10 billion next year, so that we are in position and have the window of opportunity to bring taxes down at least to the overall level that they were at the 1992 election.

Naturally, Labour Members ask where we should make the savings. If they sit back for the next few minutes, I shall tell them. First, we should reduce the Government's overheads. Wherever one looks in the public sector, whether it is at Government or local level, one still sees overmanning, waste and inefficiency. Whereas the recession forced every private company, however large or small, to cut its overheads to survive, the public sector has been almost immune. The civil service White Paper introduced this week is a start, but it is too little, too late. I have a feeling that it has been watered down by the mandarins.

The scope for manpower savings is illustrated by what has happened in the nationalised industries which have been privatised. British Telecom has reduced its work force by 29 per cent., British Gas by 18 per cent. and Powergen by 35 per cent. The public sector, like the private sector, has invested a lot of money in computerisation and information technology, but it has never squeezed out the manpower savings that the private sector has done in that area.

Wherever we look, there are examples of waste. The Inland Revenue has just built a new training centre. Perhaps it needed a training centre, but did it need an indoor heated swimming pool? The NHS offices in Leeds, with their pools and fountains, are the most expensive and extravagant offices in the city, and were opened when there was a surplus of office space at knock-down prices. The British Library has already cost £450 million. Even in this building, secretaries' desks and filing cabinets will be sold at auction next week and new ones brought in.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Townend: No, because many hon. Members want to speak.

The Government spends £20 billion on overheads. If they cut that by 5 per cent. for each of the next three years —that is very reasonable when compared with what has happened in the private sector—they will save £3 billion a year.

It is the same in local government. One has only to compare the cost of services per head in Islington with those in Wandsworth, or look at what my local Labour county council does, to see that there is an enormous amount of waste and overmanning. Salary costs of local government—excluding teachers and police—are £20 billion. If we cut those by 5 per cent. for three years, we will save £6 billion.

In Scotland, we are still spending far more per head of population than in England. The figure for local government grants in Scotland works out at £1,020 per person, while in England it is £691. In the NHS, £800 is spent per person in Scotland and £635 in England—26 per

[Mr. Townend]

cent. less. The figures for education are the same. It is not fair and not necessary, and those costs should be reduced to the English level by the next election.

Overseas aid has a budget of £2.3 billion. We all agree about giving money away when we have it, but we are in debt as a Government and as a country because of the balance of payments deficit. We could quite fairly save £0.5 billion a year for three years in that area.

There has been an explosion in legal aid. We have taken some action, but my constituents were appalled when they read that Iraqi business men have been getting more than £1 million in legal aid. We should abolish legal aid for anybody who is not a citizen of this country.

The fastest growing cause of expenditure is without doubt social security, yet there is enormous abuse and fraud. Last year, we discovered £558 million in social security abuse. Anybody who knows anything about what is happening in this country and who talks to ordinary people knows that that is just the tip of the iceberg. Greater effort must be made to reduce fraud.

In my view, too much of the social security budget is going to dishonest people who are working in the black economy, to the workshy who have elected to live off benefits instead of getting jobs, and to those who irresponsibly have children knowing that they can expect the state to house and keep them. Not enough of the budget is going to those who are really in need—the old, and particularly old-age pensioners who are just above the income support level. They cannot get housing benefit, which includes rent and repairs, because they are living in houses which their spouses have left them, and the cost of repairs is bearing down heavily on them.

I welcome the initiatives by the Secretary of State for Social Security to stop abuse as he has done in the past couple of weeks, and to close loopholes whereby foreigners coming here on holiday can claim benefit. I cannot for the life of me understand why we excluded visitors from the Republic of Ireland from that. Ireland is just as much a member of the Community as France or Germany, and I detect the malignant hand of the Foreign Office.

Many millions of pounds could be saved by contracting out and more market testing. For example, we could save about £80 million a year if we abolished the NHS stores department, except for a small unit which could do all the negotiating and buying, and left the warehousing and the handling of stock to the private sector. It is interesting that the Welsh Office is progressively doing this, and there is no reason why the rest of the country should not do the same. Just because we are talking about the health service, it does not mean that savings cannot be made, and that there is not inefficiency and overmanning.

As public sector wages are the biggest element in our costs, it is vital that we keep a firm hand on them. I urge the Government to stand firm in the dispute with the signalmen, because numerous public sector unions are looking out for what will happen.

The statement on defence last week was very heartening

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Townend: I am sorry, but many hon. Members want to speak. I must get on, because I might be asked to sit down if I am not finished by 7 o'clock.

It was heartening that the Secretary of State for Defence could find so many areas of waste and overmanning that he was able to provide the Treasury with initial figure savings without cutting the front line. When I heard my right hon. and learned Friend say that it was costing £300,000 to train a musician, and that there were many other examples of savings which could be made without any detriment to the armed forces, I asked myself why the savings could not have been made before.

People such as myself have been making speeches in Budget debate after Budget debate about the bloated overmanning and waste in the public sector. I found it a little disappointing that, at a time when communism has collapsed, the Ministry of Defence made more savings than it was asked for, and then went on a little spending spree. I should have thought that, in view of the size of the Budget deficit, the whole lot should have gone back to the Treasury.

I accept that there are considerable cultural problems to overcome if the Government are to be successful in their endeavour to cut spending. By and large, senior civil servants and heads of Departments are not likely to help Ministers to cut the size of their Departments because their status in the mandarin hierarchy depends on the size of their budget and of their work force. Indeed, many Ministers have no wish to see their Departments slimmed down.

Many Ministers do not have the will to fight their civil servants, and some of them do not have the ability—not having had business experience—to force through savings and cuts in the work force against the wishes of senior civil servants who are trying to protect their bureaucratic empire.

Last year, I was lobbying Ministers to reduce spending, and I was told several times, "You have to appreciate that it is politically more difficult to cut spending than to increases taxes." Having seen the results of the local elections, the by-elections and the European elections, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends realise that that is not true. The Tory party is nothing if it is not the party of low taxation.

Market testing and contracting out have not been applied with the same enthusiasm throughout the public service, and that must be done. To achieve that cultural aim, we must look to the Prime Minister. In the Cabinet, only three people have no vested interest in keeping their budgets up—the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary and the Prime Minister.

I hope that my right hon. Friend realises the political danger we face on taxation, and I hope that he will launch a crusade to cut waste, inefficiency, fraud and overmanning throughout the public sector, including local government. He should receive the maximum support from Ministers. It should be made clear that those who succeed in the endeavour will be promoted, and those who do not succeed will be asked to make way for others.

It must be made clear to permanent secretaries that those who do not co-operate will not get the traditional knighthood. The Prime Minister should consider appointing a Minister in every Department whose sole job would be to improve efficiency and cut waste and spending. If the civil servants are not prepared to co-operate, those Ministers should be able to bring in accountants and company doctors from the private sector,

who have had experience of cutting overheads in this terrible recession, which industry has survived so well and so efficiently.

It is not too late for us to achieve our manifesto commitment on taxation if we act this year, but it will be too late if we wait for another 18 months.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, could I point out that between the hours of 7 and 9 there will be a limit of 10 minutes on speeches.

6.59 pm

Mrs. Helen Liddell (Monklands, East): I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this debate, especially as it is such an important one and falls in the final week of the Session.

This has been a tragic Session, marred by the death of my predecessor, John Smith. I am extremely conscious of the eloquent tributes that have been paid to him from both sides of the House at the time of his death and at his subsequent funeral and memorial services. I, of course, remember him as a constituency Member, and the people of Monklands, East made it very plain that they saw John Smith very much as their own Member.

They were extremely conscious of the fact that they had in their midst the man who they believed was going to be the next Prime Minister. They too are conscious, as I am, of the unfinished business of John Smith, not least of which was the establishment of a Scottish Parliament within the framework of the United Kingdom, and that even more important unfinished business—the election of a Labour Government at the next general election. When that day comes, it will be our lasting tribute to John Smith.

When John Smith made his maiden speech before the House, he asked hon. Members to take into account

"the diffidence which I feel in attempting to follow in the footsteps of so fine a predecessor."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1970; Vol. 806, c. 243.]

I am sure that hon. Members recognise that my diffidence is even greater, as I must follow in the footsteps of someone who went on to lead my party.

Throughout the communities of Monklands, East, John Smith was respected and admired. The side of John Smith that came out so strongly after his death was the warmth, commitment and enthusiasm that he felt towards ordinary people. It is in that spirit of dedication that I wish to continue to work for the people of Monklands, East.

The parliamentary by-election that I have just come through was a bruising affair, which concentrated on one issue—the local council. That concentration offers a lesson to all of us politicians, be we in government at local or national level or elsewhere, because it demonstrated the importance of taking into account the fears and the sense of grievance of local electors. Now that the by-election is behind us, it is important to take into account the need for a time of healing within the communities of Monklands, East.

Many in the constituency felt besmirched by some of the negative publicity that attached to them. I say to the House that they are decent, honourable and hard-working people. The constituency spans a number of small communities, 12 villages, the town of Airdrie and a substantial part of Coatbridge. Those communities were the cauldron of Scotland's industrial heritage.

The men and women of those communities went to work in the textile industry, in coal mining, the iron and steel industries, shipbuilding and in motor manufacture. In the past 15 years, those industries have disappeared. Those communities, which measured themselves by the contribution they could make to the wider economy, now suffer from a lack of morale and of no longer feeling wanted.

It is incumbent upon all of us who are concerned about the future of our economy to take into account the real needs of such small communities, where there was a great emphasis on acquiring skills and education. I know that only too well, having been educated there, as was my husband. The people of those communities want their children to go out into the world with the best possible background, be it obtained in the formal educational structure or through the acquisition of skills.

One in four people in Monklands, East are out of work, and young people account for one third of them. One in five are on benefits. It is also a tragedy that, in all the statistical analysis of health and sickness in Scotland, Monklands, East breaks all the records. It is a constituency that has been visited by poverty and unemployment.

Much can be done by the House and the wider community to help encourage the regeneration of such communities—there are many like them, not just in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom. I want to see more jobs brought to those communities, bearing in mind their strong, proud heritage. A number of small industrial sites are located within the constituency, but not too many large ones, although a number of such sites throughout north Lanarkshire would be very attractive to inward investment—not least, of course, the former steel plant at Ravenscraig.

The constituency offers a number of opportunities for the siting of small businesses. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned the need to encourage small businesses, and I have a particular interest in that, because I have a particular desire to see new skills and new opportunities brought to the constituency that was good enough to elect me on 30 June.

Many opportunities for small businesses in Scotland are not taken up. In the 1980s, for example, if Scotland had had the same level of business start-up as the south-east of England, where we are today, we would have created 195,000 more jobs. Even if we had imported the death rate from that decade, which was all too apparent in the south of England, Scotland would still have been 36,000 jobs ahead of the game. That is an attractive statistic to those who are concerned about attracting jobs to Scotland, and in particular to communities such as Monklands, East.

We must do more to encourage small businesses and put fewer obstacles in the way of establishing them. Many men and women who are now seeking an opportunity in their middle years, who have perhaps lost their jobs as a consequence of the recession, wish to put their skills and expertise to much greater use in the small business sector.

Other communities in other parts of the world attract such small business most effectively. The state of Massachusetts, for example, has become the hotbed of new business start-up in the United States because of the marriage between its business community and academic institutions. I would like to see that same partnership developed in the west of Scotland and throughout it.

In Bavaria, the banking system has changed banking arrangements to make the raising of capital for small

[Mrs. Helen Liddell]

businesses that much easier. Many people who wish to start up small or medium-sized enterprises in Scotland are confronted with the traditional Scottish bank manager, who is scared of risk. Risk is endemic to small businesses. We must recognise that, before we achieve success, we may have to take into account the possibility of failure.

We cannot brook too many failures in a community that so desperately needs jobs and hope. It has so much to offer. The skilled artisans, who made sure that there was a future for people like me by offering us educational opportunities, as well as offering other opportunities to everyone, regardless of their background, are entitled to pass on to the next generations the kind of communities that they worked hard to build.

Those are the communities among which John Smith worked, and they are the communities that I dedicate myself to serve. I am very grateful to the House for its courtesy in listening to my maiden speech. I hope now to go on and continue my parliamentary career in serving the people of Monklands, East as John Smith did.

7.8 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): It gives me particular personal pleasure to follow the maiden speech by the new hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell). It was an impressive introduction to the House. The hon. Lady talked eloquently and movingly about the people of her community, their hopes and their aspirations. She linked what she said about their desire for new skills and new opportunities with her own experience. We know from the election that she is a bonny fighter and we wish her well in the House. I hope that we shall hear much more from her in the years to come. It is appropriate to mention that, for several years, John Smith was my pair in the House. All my contacts with him were a pleasure due to his humour, integrity and friendship and I, too, felt a sense of real loss at his tragic death.

I firmly support the motion before the House and congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on his approach since taking on that difficult and important job. In his speech, he dealt in a pragmatic and sensible manner with the current position of the British economy, its outlook and forecasts on it. By comparison, the performance of the shadow Chancellor was disappointing. He told us nothing of the Labour party's policies but simply made broad generalisations. I genuinely wanted him to say how, for example, the Labour party intends to enable, encourage or command the City to take longer-term decisions about industry. I accept that that problem exists, but changing it needs a concrete approach and we heard no concrete arguments from the shadow Chancellor.

The position of the British economy today bears no relation to the picture painted in the shadow Chancellor's speech. We have achieved good results: low inflation, low interest rates and a mortgage lending rate of less than 8 per cent., which is the lowest for more than 25 years. Those achievements have a positive effect on individuals' home budgets.

I agree that there are areas of difficulty and deprivation. Much has already been said about unemployment, which is and will remain a key economic and social issue in the years ahead. In national terms, it continues to be important and I appreciate that it can be a personal tragedy for individuals who are directly affected. I agreed with hon. Members who focused on the concerns of young unemployed people at the start of their working lives.

However, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) pushed out some unreal proposals to deal with unemployment. He described how unemployment had been dealt with during the second world war, when we took measures to provide the armaments that the nation needed and, in doing so, ran up an enormous national debt. Thank goodness that America was there to assist us in dealing with that problem. We could not run the economy like that today and it was unrealistic to argue that we could.

The only way in which we can safeguard jobs is to ensure that we have a thoroughly competitive economy. That is why I firmly support the Government's actions to ensure that we are not burdened with the paraphernalia of the social chapter, which would only increase costs for British industry struggling to compete with the vigorous and ever-growing economies of the Pacific rim. High costs of manufacturing are now a growing problem for Europe. It is a major benefit to Britain that we have a lower-cost economy than the rest of our European partners. We need to keep it that way.

My view on the exchange rate mechanism has been changed by hindsight. I accept that there were benefits in our membership, particularly its effect on inflation. It ensured that we squeezed inflation down to levels that have not been experienced for many years. I am pleased, however, that the Government have said that they do not expect to rejoin the ERM in the foreseeable future. We should not lose the control which we now have over our economy as a result of being out of the ERM. The effect on Britain of a future ERM-type organisation, let alone a single currency, would be much more damaging in a larger Europe. I strongly support the enlargement of the European Union but it must mean that the opportunity to get all convergence criteria moving in the same direction at the same time, with the measurements necessary to achieve a single currency, is much less likely to happen.

If we decided to go for a single currency, we would endanger the unity of individual nations and put the European Union under a strain that might lead to its break up. Some of my hon. Friends might welcome that, but I would not. I want a European Union that gives us the benefit of a wide market but it must be loosely organised on the basis of a strong market rather than tying member states too closely to each others economies.

It is important that the electorate appreciates that, although the Government have embarked, quite properly, on a ever-tighter control of public spending, we have none the less continued to increase spending on social security, education and the national health service. As last week's statement spelled out, we are attacking areas of bureaucratic overspending, such as those in the back-up to the armed services. Dealing with those is long overdue.

I applaud the Government's actions in that respect and encourage members of the Treasury Front Bench to continue the line that they are following. I see and hear positive responses from many people in my constituency, which suffered heavily during the recession, that the outlook and opportunities for them are improving week by week and month by month.

7.17 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It was with a great deal of pleasure that we heard the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell), who took over a seat from an hon. Member whom we held in the highest regard. The way in which he departed from us made us feel even more poignantly the loss that we suffered. The fact that we could give my hon. Friend such a clear vote of confidence in taking over from him means that we shall listen to anything that she has to say to us in future with great care and interest.

The Government have committed three disastrous errors. Many of us expect Governments to take a certain amount of time to learn the problems of government. But this Government have been in office for 15 years and still have not learnt much. The first disastrous error was on monetarism; the second was to waste North sea oil; and the third was the introduction of the poll tax, which did so much to assist the decline of local government.

We suffer from the problem that the growth of monetarism did much damage to manufacturing industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was right repeatedly to point out the need for that type of investment.

Conservative Governments have obviously had contempt for manufacturing industry, especially Nigel Lawson, when, in a speech at the Mansion house, he scorned the valuable work done by the House of Lords Select Committee in pointing out the importance of manufacturing industries. The service industries were held to be the great wave of the future—they were going to provide the great prosperity.

However, service industries are not alternative to manufacturing industry; they are a natural consequence of manufacturing industry. One needs efficient operations to service machinery and so on, but, less obviously, the City of London owes its eminence to manufacturing industry.

What are the big financial centres of the world? They are London, New York, Tokyo and Frankfurt, and they became financial centres only as a result of their manufacturing industry. It was because Britain in the last century was a manufacturing nation that London was created as a financial centre; it is only because America became the next big industrial power that New York was created as a financial centre; and it is only because of their industries that Frankfurt and Tokyo have become financial centres.

Whoever heard of Tokyo as a financial centre before its industry, in the post-war world, became the power that it subsequently became? Whoever heard of Frankfurt before it became an industrial centre? But Frankfurt will now be the main Community centre for our financial institutions, and we are losing the battle for financial centres in a number of ways, because our manufacturing industry is unable to support them.

I strongly welcome the existence of our City of London; it is very important, but we must understand the underlying strength that comes from manufacturing industries.

As for the service industries such as health, education and transport, they rely on the wealth creation that comes from manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry is the substratum of all those other advantages that we obtain from service industries.

That wealth creation comes from our factories—from the skills and abilities of those people who work in them. I accept that, when jobs are needed, only some of them will be found in those factories. There will not be an enormous increase in employment opportunities as a result of the greater concentration on, and the greater understanding of the need for, manufacturing industry. I accept all that. However, the output from manufacturing industry is all-important. That output creates, not so much the jobs as the wealth, and from that output, from that wealth, we can create the service industries—we can create educational opportunities, health services and all the other facilities that we require.

Services rest on the backs of manufacturing industry. We want a sensible acknowledgment of the wealth creation possibilities. That will provide the means for us to employ many more people in the public and the private service sectors. That is the principal way that we shall get people back to work—through the service industries, by getting people to work in restoring our infrastructure and repairing the decay in our cities, in a sensible programme of reconstruction, paid for by a new, firm industrial policy.

Our recent productivity increases have resulted mainly from investment for efficiency rather than from investment for efficiency and the expansion of output. If one invests simply to obtain efficiency, one will reduce employment. One needs to invest both for efficiency, which is important, and for an expansion of output. That is why our manufacturing base has not expanded in the way that those of other countries have. We need today a new understanding of the importance to our country of manufacturing investment. That should take place in this country and in our industries.

Many years ago, in 1961, there was the bank rate investigation of a Governor of the Bank of England who had advised the sale of sterling and commented:

"It may not be patriotic but it makes sense."

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has commented on one aspect of patriotism today. The wish to invest in our country is an aspect of patriotism. Of course there is a need to invest overseas in certain areas, but patriotism means that we should try to improve our manufacturing processes, our manufacturing industry and our employment opportunities here in Britain. Those matters should be paramount.

We need to encourage people to invest. The Government can do something about that immediately, by increasing capital allowances. The present 25 per cent. rate for capital allowances is ludicrous. I have argued repeatedly that is not an investment incentive but with with an investment disincentive.

Everyone knows that many items of capital equipment actually depreciate by more than 25 per cent. a year. That is especially true in the first year. The profit made by the sellers of a piece of capital equipment means that it will not be worth 75 per cent. at the end of the first year—that may be the profit that is made on it. If one buys a piece of capital equipment for £1,000, there are not many cases when, if one tries to sell it, one will receive £750 for that piece of capital equipment at the end of the first year.

So we are dealing, not with an investment incentive, but an investment disincentive. That is something that the Government can change straight away.

The other great error was over North sea oil. It was a great pity. We had a wonderful opportunity. I minuted the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Denis Healey, in 1977 and told him, "If you do nothing with this money, it will just be spent on consumption. If we do something for

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

manufacturing industry—that is not the best way to invest, I grant that—it is better than using it to increase our consumption, which we shall not be able to maintain over a long period."

That was the case then for doing something with our North sea oil. It is a great pity. We missed the one opportunity that we had, which has now gone, because now it is part of our current basis of consumption.

Speaking of consumption, a consumption-led boom is not the way to spend our way out of recession. We want an investment-led boom, an investment-led recovery, and we should be working towards that. I do not think that the way to proceed is to try to increase the levels of consumption to bring an improvement in the economy.

The third great disaster was the poll tax. The poll tax was not just a foolish tax—of course it was—it was difficult to collect, in many cases easy to avoid, and very much more unfair than the old rating system. The specific problem that has resulted is that we have diminished the role of local government, and the position of local government is now far worse as a result of the introduction of the poll tax than ever it was.

I remember—I was only a small player in those days—that we created Manchester airport in the spirit of the old Manchester ship canal, whereby 95 per cent. of the ships of the world could come right into the heart of Manchester. If we were to be worthy successors to those people, we wanted our own airport.

That was the spirit, and we must return to that spirit. We must return to the spirit of local government—the spirit of co-operation between people in different ways. The beginning must be made with industry, and it is to that area of the economy that the Chancellor of the Exchequer must turn.

7.27 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I join all those who have recently spoken in expressing my pleasure at the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell). She spoke with fluency and passion, and I felt that she brought to us some of the adrenalin that she plainly felt during a hectic election campaign. One could think, as she spoke, of the sweat and energy as she sat up thinking what she was going to say at that difficult meeting the next day, and as she rehearsed it to herself, perhaps rehearsed it to her husband and then delivered it with passion and energy. Let us hope that she continues to grace the House with the energy and interest that she undoubtedly must have displayed in her successful and difficult by-election.

I should like to start from a slightly different point of view from that of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He said that the Chancellor did not control anything and that international capital controlled everything.

All Front-Bench spokesmen address the House on the basis that the Government control most things. I diffidently suggest that the Government control few things. The Government govern best when they attempt to create a known and stable framework within which the people may make their own prosperity, both for themselves and for their fellow subjects of the Queen—and, I should add, the citizens of the European Union. It is important to decide whether the rate of growth and the general prosperity at present time are consistent with a stable framework.

One thing that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor did not say about inflation was on the extent to which it inevitably distorts the economy. One of the great distortions of the boom was the housing market. We all recall that in the three years 1986, 1987 and 1988 the value of private housing rose by 20 per cent., 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. respectively. Housing was not bought for shelter or even for the display of personal goods; it was bought for speculation. People of a very young age were trying to get on to the housing ladder as quickly as possible.

As the economy adjusts to about 2 per cent. inflation from about 10 per cent. inflation, young married couples are now buying houses later in life and the rented sector has picked up satisfactorily, not just because of the reduction in inflation but because of the considerable reduction in the stranglehold of rent controls and excessive security of tenure. In addition, the housing market is having to work its way through the negative equity suffered by about 2 million home owners who bought just before the end of the boom.

The economy is now stable and sustainable—mainly, I suspect, because of the delayed advantages of having come out of the exchange rate mechanism on 16 September 1992 and because of the substantial relaxation in monetary policy that followed that.

I do not want to be too technical in this short speech, but for those who enjoy technicalities I commend a good article in the *Financial Times* of 5 July, which set out what is happening to sterling M0. That means cash in hand, which is now circulating at about the same rate as it was at the top of the boom in 1988. There is every sign that the retail sector is very strong. People are not borrowing to buy big items such as land or housing, but they are spending money on consumer items. One of the best signs of that can be found in that article, which details the extent to which more and more £20 notes are coming into circulation.

There is also anecdotal evidence of the strength of the retail economy—for example, the absolute explosion in car boot sales. I understand that about 1,500 car boot sales take place every week— *[Interruption.]* All right, it is part of the spiv economy. Hon. Members may laugh at that and say how dreadful it is, but it creates wealth and that is what the economy is about. We should note the strength of M0, the strength of the retail sector and the considerable activity in the new car market.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) nods. He knows a great deal more about the car market than any other hon. Member will ever know. I am sure that a car manufacturer is rather like a farmer, and I have never met a farmer willing to admit that he was doing well. If an hon. Member with a car manufacturing interest agrees that the industry is doing well, car manufacturers must be doing jolly well indeed. Therefore, I contend that we have the basis for sustainable growth.

Sometimes when we talk about general trends, the man or woman in the constituency says, "We don't see much of it in Wolverhampton," or Stourbridge or wherever. I draw hon. Members' attention to two recent reports on how the local economy of Wolverhampton is growing. The first is from the Wolverhampton chamber of commerce. In its quarterly economic survey, published on 11 July, its chief executive says:

"I find the responses for the first half of the year especially encouraging. The Chamber has always held the view that our emergence from this very deep recession should be moderate and this clearly seems to be the pattern."

He then gives details of the way in which he notices sustained and satisfactory growth in all the areas that his chamber covered over the past half-year.

Those of us who have been in the House for some time may remember Mr. Geoff Edge, who is now the chairman of the west midlands economic bureau. In that capacity, each month he provides Members of Parliament and others in the west midlands with what he describes as a labour market briefing. Mr. Edge was a distinguished or, if not distinguished, vigorous supporter of the policies so consistently put forward by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. Mr. Edge would not easily applaud much of the activity of a Tory Government. However, he says about the west midlands that unemployment among the under-25s has dropped greatly over the past year—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

7.37 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): It is a great pleasure to follow the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell), not least to welcome her into the doughty and select company of Lanarkshire Members of Parliament. Our constituents expect a great deal from us and over the many years that we have known her, in her election campaign and, now, in her remarkable maiden speech, she has demonstrated how much she will contribute.

I am sure that the Chancellor will be pleased to hear that I agree with him that there is no reason why we cannot look forward to a long period of sustained growth with unemployment falling, low inflation and the balance of payments and public borrowing coming within sustainable limits.

On macro-economic policy, both the Government and the Opposition have now rejected the argument that one target will do. In the old days it was unemployment, then money supply, then inflation, and then the exchange rate. Now, perhaps, it is unemployment again. It used to be argued that if the one chosen target is achieved and maintained the rest will come right, or at least be accepted that they are outside the Government's influence. But successive targets have been missed and abandoned, because the measures needed to achieve them would have such damaging consequences for other aspects of the economy that they could not possibly be pursued.

All the objectives are affected by all the instruments of policy—tax, public spending and interest rates—and they must be kept in mind. It is not possible to put everything right overnight. It takes years for most of the effects of policy changes to appear. Objectives now satisfactorily achieved cannot be assumed to stay achieved.

The emerging consensus is that all the instruments of policy must be used in the balanced pursuit of all the objectives—not just inflation, unemployment, the exchange rate, the current balance or public borrowing, but all of them together, with one or two more added according to taste, and for several years ahead. I have carried out the exercise of designing such balance-achieving policies with the Treasury's own apparatus of policy optimisation on the Treasury's own model. In successive years since 1987, they were published and sent to the then Chancellor. Had Chancellors followed those analyses, they would have avoided the major mistakes of economic policy, which, in the event, were made. No doubt similar analyses were carried out at the time in the Treasury.

This year, the same analysis of the Treasury model is more or less consistent with the Treasury's summer economic forecast. But it makes it possible to look further ahead, which, of course, the Treasury does internally. It goes into more detail and explores the trade-offs. The prospects are not exciting, but nor are they calamitous. With general Government consumption kept at around its present share of 25 per cent. of gross domestic product, the standard rate of income tax edging above 26 per cent. after 1995, and allowances indexed, the public sector borrowing requirement is still not brought below 3 per cent. of GDP until 1997.

Without a clear exchange rate stabilisation policy, there would be major destabilising swings of the sterling exchange rate. So policy towards the exchange rate and its mode of stabilisation, allowing for rational market expectations, needs to be treated in the policy design process. The expected exchange rate index remains near its current level of 80. The current balance remains in deficit to the extent of 1 to 2 per cent. of GDP. Inflation rises above 4 per cent. for three years from 1996, in mild breach of the Government's target range, as the effect of the increased indirect taxes and public utility charges come through.

The growth of GDP falls below 2 per cent. in the three years from 1997, and the growth of real disposable personal incomes falls by 2 per cent. in the three years from 1996. Unemployment does not fall below 8 per cent. until 2000. All that, of course, will adapt to external circumstances. It will not work out quite like that, but that is the general picture that will follow in response to the external circumstances and internal performance as events unfold.

Such an overall prospect would not be welcomed by Government or Opposition. Can we do better? For the first time this year, the Treasury model contains a genuine supply-side effect. Investment in manufacturing industry is allowed directly to increase manufactured exports. The halt in the fall of the UK share of world exports of manufactures in the late 1980s was seized on and extrapolated in past years, without explanation, to produce hopelessly over-optimistic forecasts of the current balance. Now, a plausible, long-term explanation has been found. It is taken into account in the forecast. Could further supply-side effects be found?

The first report in this Session of the Select Committee on Science and Technology drew attention to recent work, using international comparative data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, on the effects of business research and development on total factor productivity, and linked that with other recent work assessing US experience with research and development tax credits. Taken together, those analyses suggest that an R and D tax credit, with supporting measures and within European Union rules, could increase the rate of growth of GDP by 0.8 per cent. per annum within five years.

The place where that would start, because it would act on competitiveness, is in manufactured exports. Putting it in there alone and not into the rest of manufacturing output, which contributes to domestic consumption, and applying the same policy rules to the better-performing economy, we get an improved picture. Of course we do, but how

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

much? Income tax can be kept to 25 per cent., and growth does not fall below 2 per cent. per annum. Unemployment falls below 8 per cent. in 1996 instead of 2000, and to below 5 per cent. in 2002, by the end of the next Parliament. There would be more supply-side effects to go for if hard evidence could be found—as we found with R and D incentives—of the effects of investment incentives and improved training, let alone special employment measures.

Can such results be believed? Do they offer a viable approach to more stable economic growth? Certainly, they need double-checking and cross-checking. Sound judgment will still be needed, and there will, of course, be remaining risk and uncertainty. The macro-economic modelling consortium, consisting of the Economic and Social Research Council, the Treasury and the Bank of England, which finances the academic models, is asking the modellers who are applying for grants this year for the next four years to pursue such policy analyses.

The report of the consortium, referring to my work, says that there is a need for a clearly stated framework for economic policy. It says:

"The objectives and priorities of policy makers can be established (or at least postulated and, where appropriate, alternatives can be given). The modelling teams can then recommend the actual adjustment of policy instruments which would best serve these objectives and priorities, and present the expected outcomes. This makes it possible for public policy makers and businesses to see how alternative objectives and priorities affect the expected results. Teams could participate in a number of policy advice exercises."

Those are not my words, but those of the consortium—the Economic and Social Research Council, the Treasury itself and the Bank of England. Economic policy-makers now have a firmer basis for judgment if they have the wit to use it.

7.46 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I am most grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make a few brief comments this evening.

As we look back over the past two years, it has been clear that we have been slowly but surely in a recovery process. As with all such processes, it has been somewhat patchy. We have seen regions and industries recovering at different rates. But there is no doubt that the economy is recovering for everybody to see. What is somewhat different about this recovery, given that it has now been going for that long, is that the "feel good" factor remains low.

I read in one of the Sunday papers that some 70 per cent. of people believe that we are still in a recession. That is despite the fact that the economy is growing by nearly 3 per cent., unemployment has fallen by some 330,000 and many other indicators look good. Indeed, the OECD and other economic forecasters have made very positive observations about the British economy.

For decades, the "feel good" factor has been linked largely to property prices. Monetary and fiscal policy has been inextricably linked to that process. Since the war, the result has been something of a rollercoaster in interest rates as we have sought to revive the economy by lowering interest rates and encouraging activity in the property market, then cutting down on the revival by jacking up interest rates again and depressing property activity.

Unfortunately, time and again, the "feel good" factor that has resulted has led to a hangover. But what is unique about the economy now is that the recovery is happening with low inflation and low interest rates, without any visible inflationary pressures, without the traditional recovery and, indeed, sometimes, speculation in the property sector. The evidence is very clear. Is that necessarily a bad thing? Is a strong property revival essential to sustain growth? On the contrary, we appear to have healthy economic growth free of all the property shenanigans of the past few years. That bodes extremely well for the future.

The distortions which have undoubtedly been caused by mortgage relief in the past are now withering on the vine. Next year we shall see tax relief reduced to 15 per cent. I hope that that process will continue, except perhaps for first-time buyers, until the tax distortions disappear altogether. They have been part and parcel of the yo-yo in interest rate movements that has paralleled the yo-yo in property prices that has been wholly unwelcome.

So we now have in prospect economic recovery with stability, without the property element involved. I am confident, as we look at the economic indicators and the lack of any inflationary pressures, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, in maintaining the course that he is successfully pursuing, will bring about low inflation growth for many years to come.

As other hon. Members have observed, we were hit during 1994 by weakness in the bond market. Traditionally, weakness in the bond market comes about through inflationary expectations. But where, indeed, is the inflation? It certainly does not exist at the factory gate or at the retail level. It has been limited to a number of commodities. The rot started in the United States, where people saw the signs in the US Government deficit and foresaw it increasing yet again as a result of the proposed spending plans of President Clinton.

Another factor has been the illiquidity of world capital markets. Given the volatile nature of the world capital markets and our need to continue to borrow, it is vital that we continue to scale back our deficit. Between 1993 and 1996 we shall cut our budget deficit by some 4.5 per cent. of GDP. Despite that, spending will continue to rise next year and the year after that. We need to support my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the spending round to ensure that we keep public expenditure in check.

The post-war experience of Japan is certainly instructive. The Japanese economy is now maturing and it has its problems, but much of the Japanese success story has been based on access to capital at low interest rates. Low interest rates have attracted borrowers and investors because they have believed in the coherence and stability of Japanese fiscal and monetary policy. Japanese business got its reward because the Government played their part. Low interest rates and low inflation have been at the heart of the Japanese post-war recovery. Now here in Britain we have policies which are taking us along that route. It is already happening and that bodes well for the future.

Under the great welter of macroeconomic statistics there are sometimes good stories to tell. I should like to relay the experience of my constituency. I am happy to relay to the House that unemployment has dropped by some 20 per cent. in the past 12 months. We are seeing a revival in the local economy. Bury St. Edmunds has the

lowest unemployment in East Anglia. The agricultural sector is in good shape. The two United States air force bases in my constituency are expanding.

By far the largest employer in my constituency is the horse-racing industry. On Saturday my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary visited the town of Newmarket and saw for himself the increased number of owners, the increased number of horses in training and the rising price of blood stock. That vital part of the economy of west Suffolk is fully in revival as a result of the help of Treasury Ministers, to whom I am enormously grateful, as are my constituents.

Apart from that benign situation in the western part of Suffolk, we have a constellation of good overall economic indicators. I sat here this afternoon and recalled the words some months ago of Bryan Gould. He said that the Labour party had no proposals on macro-economic policies, specifically on interest rates, money supply or any of the key elements of taxation that go to make a coherent economic policy. Nothing has changed. We have certainly heard that today. No serious attempt has been made to present any coherent alternative.

We know one policy of the Labour party. It would be hugely destructive. I have spoken to many employers in my constituency about it. It is minimum wage legislation. We know that in Spain and France, where there is similar statutory wage legislation to that proposed by the Labour party, youth unemployment is tragically high, with all the consequences that flow from that. We certainly do not want to see that here in Britain at any price.

We cannot survive as a nation without exporting. I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the initiatives taken by the Department of Trade and Industry to promote exports for our business men and women. It has also undertaken an initiative to have 100 individuals seconded to the DTI from key British companies. It will help them and the DTI in the spirit of enterprise to enhance our export capabilities. That is welcome.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has said that we have made major strides in restructuring our economy. As we survey the current economic scene, we can see that the restructuring is paying off in a truly sustainable way. The Labour party knows in its heart of hearts that that is certainly the case. Therefore, I look forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, after the next general election to continuing to sit on your right hand side.

7.56 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): We have heard from the last two Conservative Members who have spoken that the key to our economy is the horse-racing market at Newmarket and car boot sales in Wolverhampton. As the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) put it, there is no difference for him between a car boot sale and a motor car sale. I am proud to speak for the west midlands and I declare my interest as a chairman of a public limited company that supplies the United Kingdom, European and world motor industry. For us there is a world of difference.

The increased size and rate of growth of the United Kingdom motor industry is much to be appreciated. We are glad to see it take off after the most dismal years in its history, engineered as only the Conservative party could, with that marvellous disregard for the interests of British manufacturing, to give it the worst two years since the second world war. After such a bad period, it is inevitable that things will get better.

I was a little surprised to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) say that his model showed that, if the Government had followed that model, their economic policy would have been better. Anything would have been better than the economic policy of the Government since about 1989 to 1990. Nothing could have been more cack-handed or better conceived to produce exactly the opposite of the Government's stated purposes of policy than the economic and industrial policy that they have pursued.

I pay a personal tribute to the maiden speech by my hon. Friend the new Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell). Having heard her today, I am sure that she will be a most successful and distinguished successor to the late John Smith. I am sure that all my hon. Friends will join me in saying that, having heard her remarkable maiden speech.

All that we can say about the Government's economic policy is that they have stopped digging a great hole. They have finally started to dig themselves out of it. As is always the case, if one creates a big enough recession, one comes out of it. There is nothing remarkable about that. We saw it back in 1966 when we abandoned the plan for growth and decided to go back to the old Treasury policies of cutting and recession. Sure enough, the balance of payments came right and unemployment increased. Sure enough, two years later in 1970 the economy was booming again. We have always seen that old pattern. The only difference in this case has been the length, depth and frequency of the recessions engineered by the Government since they first came to power 15 years ago. Three recessions in a decade must be a record.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Two in 15.

Mr. Robinson: No, there have been three. All were marked by a continual pattern of boom doom, go bust, stop and go. Throughout economic policy, we have seen that pattern under this Government and previous Governments. It has been as simple as that.

Now that we are coming out of recession, the Government display nothing but the usual complacency that all is well. Of course, all is not well. None of the fundamentals in the British economy has changed. All that has changed is that we are at a different stage in the stop-go cycle. Instead of being complacent and thinking, "God, we have got rid of that; we have managed to win an election despite the recession"—a remarkable achievement—the Government should ask what they can do to put right the fundamentals of the British economy and British industry. All that the Government are trying to do is settle their internal differences and divisions in the hope of trying to smooth their way to the next general election.

Nothing is more apparent than the total disdain and mutual incompatibility between the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who put a scarcely credible distance between themselves and could not bear to look each at during the debate. I have not seen that since we had the remarkable spectacle of the occupants of No. 10 and No. 11 Downing street not speaking to each other, but choosing to disagree every time that they did speak. I am pleased to see the Chief Secretary deny it. It has been denied on previous occasions too.

[Mr. Robinson]

I doubt very much that the Chief Secretary will be operating from his current position in a week or two weeks' time. I am sure that he will not. One of the chief reasons for that is that cohabitation between him and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has become impossible, as it is throughout the ranks of Conservative Back Benchers, who agree about nothing other than some implicit, sordid deal to patch over their differences in an attempt to win the next election. This time, that will not work.

Meanwhile, the job of getting the British economy and British industry right, and the need for investment and a policy on exports and industrial investment, goes by the board. What causes most concern about our recovery is that, unlike the German recovery, it is based on consumption. Although we welcome the growth in the home car market, we need to achieve a massive increase in car output. There has been an increase, but it is nowhere near enough. We need to achieve a massive increase in exports. We have achieved some improvement, but it is nowhere near enough.

The trade balance and the public sector borrowing requirement deficits remain far too high. Although the Government might smooth over the problems for a couple of years, in three years' time, we shall return, as we always have before, to the same old problems of the endemic, structural weaknesses of the British economy and manufacturing industry. They go hand in hand. They are diferent sides of the same coin.

What have the Government got to offer? Nothing except a policy to try to nudge through the next week, the next set of figures and the next problem. They will deal with anything but the real problem, whatever it is.

A few people tell us that Germany is in great trouble. Germany is a massive continental power of 80 million people. It has invested enormously in the former East Germany. In the eastern countries on its border with the former Soviet Union, countries in the far east and in China —where its investment is much higher than our investment —it is emerging as the powerhouse of the European Union. We shall be a tiny island, a sideshow compared with what is going on in Europe.

That is a future that the Chief Secretary may welcome. I happen to share many of his views and reservations about the common currency and the so-called purport of the Franco-German alliance. But running away from the problems will not help our problem; and trying to pretend that we have achieved growth in gross domestic product and in income will not hide the basic problem that the Germans and the French are investing in productive output and in the strength of their economies, but all that we are doing is achieving growth out of consumption.

That is the central problem of the recovery. That problem is bound to come home to roost. That is why in the foreign markets sterling is still so weak. For the moment, the attention is on the dollar, but where will the international currency markets focus their attention next? It is bound to be on sterling, and sterling's weakness will therefore be exposed.

We need a policy for our manufacturing industries, exports and investment. We need a policy that will encourage growth in investment and exports. We must understand net exports. As we all know, exports are not enough if our our propensity to import is disastrously high. Unless there is a policy for the growth of net exports and for investment in manufacturing, and unless a series of projects are geared towards that, in two years time we shall be back to where we were two years ago. That is the sum total of Government policy. The country deserves far better.

8.5 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) should have read the *Evening Standard*—not a paper that traditionally supports the Conservative party—three weeks ago, when it carried the headline "Triple Whammy". The article in question talked about the Government's good economic news of the past few weeks. That headline said it all. It referred to the fact that unemployment and inflation were decreasing and to the fact that productivity was increasing. Perhaps it should have read "Quadruple Whammy" or "Quintuple Whammy", as retail sales and manufacturing output have also risen. Many of the hon. Gentleman's comments did not add up; and, unfortunately, owing to lack of time, I cannot answer the points that he made.

Of the great whammies referred to in the *Evening Standard* headline, inflation was the most important. If one buys a property, the three most important rules are location, location and location. If one tries to run an economy, the three most important points are inflation, inflation and inflation. Our respective inflation policies illustrate the differences between the Conservative and Labour parties.

The Labour leadership election has been more revealing of Labour party policy than any speech in the House. The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that jobs should be a higher priority than inflation—and the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said that low inflation and low employment were mutually incompatible shows the distinction between the two parties. To take a comment by a previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), and turn it round, the Labour party is now saying that high inflation is a price worth paying for lower unemployment.

I am pleased that in his Mansion house speech, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor rejected that approach and said that he was not prepared to throw away the hard-won gains of recent years—he did not want Britain to go into a boom that we all knew would be followed by a bust. I must say that talk of a boom takes those hon. Members with seats in London or the south-east a little bit by surprise, as unemployment remains stubbornly high. But the recovery is now stronger than expected.

The first reaction to the Chancellor's Mansion house speech came from Lord Lawson, who disagreed, saying that one could not stop the ups and down of the economic cycle. As he saw a few ups and downs in his time as Chancellor, one has to say. "He would say that, wouldn't he?" Both Chancellors are right. One cannot flatten out the economic cycles but one can do as the United States of America has managed to do and make them less violent. With a different approach to economic policy, the United States had a shorter and shallower recession.

Why should we, as members of the governing party, be believed when we say that history will not repeat itself and

that inflation will not run away again? First, we have a clear determination to get public finances under control and to control public expenditure. The defence statement and what I am hearing from the Department of Social Security is encouraging and leads me to believe that we will, indeed, get public expenditure under control. In addition, the public sector borrowing requirement is perhaps now lower than we originally thought.

The second reason why we shall be believed about our efforts to control inflation is that the minutes of the meetings between the Government—the Chancellor—and the Bank of England are now published. It has dawned on everybody what a significant step publication represented: it makes it impossible to abandon the battle against inflation for a quick political fix.

That battle remains finely balanced. The good news is that there is no house-price inflation. House prices are not soaring as they did in the late 1980s, primarily because of the erosion of mortgage tax relief and the rise in fixed-rate mortgages. Buyers are no longer putting their last pound into property, so I hope we shall see an investment-led recovery rather than a housing-boom recovery.

All the indicators are set to green, and the danger is that inflationary pressures will build up. I remind the House that the target for inflation is between 1 and 2 per cent. by the end of this Parliament. The acid test of the Government will be whether, having reduced interest rates for some years, they will be prepared to increase them if circumstances require it. Monetary policy is extremely loose.

Real interest rates are very low, but long-term interest rates are quite high and the gap between the two is quite substantial. The market expects interest rates to rise, and that is confirmed in the Bank of England's inflation forecast. I have no doubt that the tax rises will take some heat out of the inflationary pressures and that the imposition of VAT on gas and electricity has barely started to bite, but we must raise interest rates if necessary—coupled with tight control of public expenditure in the November Budget if appropriate.

My great surprise is that the public are still not aware of the recovery. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) said, some 70 per cent. of the country still believe that we are in recession. There is no doubt that unemployment is still a problem, particularly in the south-east, but one of the signs that things are beginning to turn is that skill shortages are appearing.

The disappointment is that the recovery has not led to a rise in confidence in the City. In the past six months, the stock market has gone into substantial slide, which has probably been linked to the interaction between the yen and the dollar and the herd-like instincts of fund managers in the City in following the New York markets. There has been scepticism about the American Government's handling of the economy, and a leading American forecaster said the other day, "Whenever a Government spokesman says something about the US economy, I think, 'Sell'."Only two weeks ago, the United Kingdom market finally broke away from the American market and there has since been a 4 per cent. rise in our stock market, which shows that fund managers are placing reliance on our own instincts and our own good results rather than worldwide indicators.

We must remain competitive to sustain recovery. As the President of the Board of Trade is well aware, having just published his competitiveness White Paper, we must change and move on. The City should become more involved in companies' and industries' future and economic well-being.

Everyone must change their attitudes. I believe that the modest proposal from Mr. Alistair Ross-Goobey, chief executive of Postel, one of the largest fund managers in the City, to abandon three-year rolling contracts and replace them with two-year rolling contracts is a step in the right direction, showing that institutions can and should change their attitude to and involvement with the City.

We must aim to be the world's best, but if that is our aim we are already out of date because the world's best have already moved on. We have the ability to be the world's best and I support the motion.

8.13 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): This debate has been characterised by much false optimism from Conservative Members. According to them, the green shoots of recovery promised so long ago by the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), are finally blossoming and everything in the garden is rosy. I am afraid that most people outside this place probably would not recognise that picture.

The recovery is far from well established, with much uncertainty and lack of confidence prevalent among consumers and industrialists. They know that the Government are promising a false dawn yet again, for they have not forgotten that £7 billion-worth of tax rises are still in the pipeline, with 10 more Tory taxes on the way.

It will take more than a puff of hot air about full employment and a visit to a TUC conference to convince people of the Government's ability to manage their way out of the economic mess that they have created. The public will know that Ministers have been forced to talk the language of full employment not by the misery of 3 million people being without jobs but by the threat to their own jobs from the consequences of their economic and political failure.

The Government's conversion to the merits of full employment is belied by their actions. There is no Treasury forecast for unemployment. I notice that there is a forecast — quite rightly, because these things are significant— for growth, inflation, the trade balance and the public sector borrowing requirement, so why not for unemployment? The answer is simple enough: the projected growth rate of 2.75 per cent. is simply not enough to reduce unemployment to anywhere near its pre-recession levels. Interestingly, while the number of people on the unemployment register is falling, claimants clearly are not going into jobs. The number of people in employment fell by 73,000 in the last quarter and by more than 100,000 in the last half year. No wonder the air is thick with accusations of statistical jiggery-pokery.

The conjuring trick has been given a new slant by documents released to me—or, rather, leaked to me—in the past few weeks from the Employment Service, which show that unemployed claimants are being deliberately offered low-paid, hard-to-fill vacancies in out-of-the-way parts of the country to try to con them out of their benefits. Ex-miners, who have been made redundant through no fault of their own, risk losing their benefit entitlement if they turn down jobs as hairdressers, debt collectors and so on. That seems to be the Government's vision of the future

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

—less concern for unemployed people than for meeting artificial Treasury targets imposed by Ministers and a low-pay, low-wage, low-skill and no-hope economy.

If there was any correlation between forcing down wages and driving up employment, my region would be the boom region of Britain, but the north has the worst of both worlds. We are the low-pay capital and we have had the highest regional unemployment in every month since the Conservatives took office in May 1979. Nor is it just the north that is suffering. Between March 1990 and March 1994, unemployment in the previously prosperous south-east almost trebled. That has been the Government's triumph—the creation of a level economic playing field, where economic dislocation and devastation stalk the whole land from John O'Groats to Land's End. That is why, north and south, the Government's false promises will not be believed.

The Government's record tells its own story: it is a record of low growth and high unemployment; of deceit and broken promises on tax; of a failure to pay our way in the world, with record trade imbalances in the past few years; of casualisation of employment; and of one of the worst levels of investment in skills training, research and development and manufacturing. That record promises no long-term future of sustainable growth for our country or its citizens. Britain will succeed only if we can harness the strength of every part of Britain. If we allow any region to decline, economic and social decay will result and the ability of the whole economy to compete will be weakened.

The structural unemployment that characterises so much of our nation is a symptom of political failure. It is wasteful, inefficient and, most of all, unnecessary. However, it is the direct by-product of a market-driven approach, determined from the centre, which ignores the regional impact of central Government policy. That approach failed in the 1980s and it will fail again in the 1990s.

Mr. Heald: If the hon. Gentleman looks across Europe, he will see far higher unemployment, particularly in countries such as Sweden which have followed the kind of philosophy for which the hon. Gentleman is arguing. Can the hon. Gentleman see other reasons why unemployment is high in Europe but low in Britain? Perhaps unemployment is low here because of the flexibility of the labour market. What does the hon. Gentleman say about that?

Mr. Milburn: I would not call between 2 million and 3 million unemployed a low figure. That is a direct insult to those people who are out of jobs and reflects the complacent attitude that we have seen throughout the debate. The Government seem to be content to sit on their laurels and rest with the achievement—if that is what it can be called—of creating 2.5 million unemployed. I do not know about Conservative Members, but people in my part of the world are not happy to sit back and satisfy themselves with that kind of record.

The current structural unemployment is a disgrace and it is quite unnecessary. During the 1980s, the market-driven approach produced an overheated south and an under-resourced north. Pressure on the green belt, labour shortages and crazy property prices sat side by side with under-utilised industrial sites and unemployment—and that in regions just 200 miles apart.

A sensible Government would have redirected spending to mop up excess supply and to dampen down excess demand by switching investment priorities. Instead, the brakes were slammed on: interest rates were forced up, plunging the whole country into a deep and damaging downturn. The recession, which was born and bred in the south of England, grew into a Frankenstein's monster that stalked the whole land.

Quite simply, Britain's centralised decision-making process could not produce the necessary flexibility to deal with the differing needs of different parts of the country. Instead, it treated the whole nation as though Liverpool and London were exactly the same.

No other industrial nation has such a centralised decision-making and financial system. Indeed, the success of economies such as that in Germany is built on the sure bedrock of decentralisation and devolution. Public banks are organised in such a way that they are embedded in the local and regional clusters that make up the German success story. That approach has been underpinned by a more widespread diffusion of economic and political power to ensure that industrial enterprises across the whole nation and in all regions receive the lifeblood of investment that they need to survive and to compete.

In this country, long-term sustainable growth is dependent on the adoption of industrial and employment policies that place the premium on investment for the long term in all regions of Britain. However, in this country there is no proper annual regional audit of public spending and no regional element to monopolies or mergers policy. There is no attempt to diffuse outwards the centralised financial structures that dominate the United Kingdom economy. Instead, we have the absurd spectacle of a Government cutting regional aid spending during a recession—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I call the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier).

8.23 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I will not try to follow the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) down his route. I want to begin by declaring an interest. I placed a substantial bet last week, not on one of the horses of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring), but with my bookmakers, the IG Index, on the sterling contract that short-term interest rates would not rise as fast as the market thinks that they will. I did that because I have such confidence in the Government's anti-inflationary abilities.

Two years ago, I made a speech in which I took the then rather fashionable view that monetary conditions were too tight while the fiscal position was too loose. Since then, the Government have taken several sensible steps to control the fiscal position. However, I may be almost alone tonight in arguing that the monetary position is still too tight. How can that possibly be when short-term interest rates are at their lowest for a generation?

In my speech two years ago, I quoted Professor Tim Congdon's model, but I suggested that he did not include a major factor—the massive one-off impact on the monetary figures that the changes in the housing market

were likely to have. Professor Congdon kindly sent me his latest document a couple of days ago, and I was intrigued to see that he devoted all the copy to that subject.

If Professor Congdon's approach is now correct—I argue that he has not gone quite far enough—we should be profoundly interested for three reasons. First, it will mean that our inflationary projections are, if anything, not optimistic enough. We really have beaten inflation in the medium term. Secondly, it will mean that in the medium term our outlook for a healthy economy is even better than impartial observers such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are suggesting, but—this is an important and significant "but"—we may have, in getting from here to there, a significant monetary glitch to cross.

The broad money supply today is growing at only 3.1 per cent. Coincidentally, that is almost exactly the rate at which it was growing two years ago. If the one-off surge in money lent to speculators of various sorts is removed, the actual growth in broad money is only about 1 per cent. In other words, for the first time in a generation at least, and as far back as we have a really good record for broad money, there is a sustained shrinkage in the real money supply.

That is backed up by several subsidiary factors. For example, the growth in wages is running at only 3.75 per cent. Given the rapid expansion in productivity at the moment, that is only just a real increase. Most significantly, I want to focus on the workings of the housing market.

The housing market is difficult to measure because there are so many indices. They include the Halifax and the Nationwide and can be seasonally adjusted or not. However, they all show that, as I suggested might be the case two years ago, the housing market has not recovered. I believe that it is right that it should not recover. Lower property prices are healthy.

Why has the housing market not recovered? First, we must consider the inflationary factor. People believed that it was worth spending more money on a house if, because of the fall in the value of money, the debt that they borrowed would erode vis-a-vis the house price. Secondly, we must consider the fiscal factor, in that the real value of mortgage interest relief has declined. However, thirdly and crucially—I believe that all the economists who focus on housing have left this factor out of the picture—we must consider the geographical impact of the collapse in the cost of travel to the continent which occurred at the same time as the introduction of the single market.

The massive disproportion in house prices in northern France and southern England cannot be sustained indefinitely. Some of my constituents are moving across the channel to retire and people are selling second homes in my area, and I am sure in other areas in southern England, and purchasing properties from estate agents advertising their wares in English in northern France.

That factor could, in the 1990s, match in reverse the one-off inflationary impact of the liberalisation of credit in the 1980s, which gave us such problems with the monetary indicators then and which fed through into a most unexpected burst of inflation in spite of apparently high interest rates.

We might appear to have low interest rates now, but they are not as low as they seem. Long-term interest rates at 8 per cent.—that is, a real rate of 5.5 per cent.—are quite high. A short-term base rate of 5.25 per cent. is not as low as it looks, because the banks have widened their margins. It is certainly nothing like as low as the 3 per cent. which the Americans, whose economic experience is much closer to ours than to our European partners, chose to sit at for some time. Even if those rates are as low as many people believe, the impact of that one-off, massive, painful adjustment in the housing market—I am convinced that it is a good thing in the long run, but it is monetarily painful in the short run—will cause a one-off shrinkage in the money supply, which could give us a bumpy ride over the next year or so.

The reaction to that is easily coped with, and the clear water is on the other side—non-inflationary growth on a major scale, and with the extra bonus that, because money is no longer being channelled disproportionately into bricks and mortar, it will be available for the investment which Opposition Members have mentioned and which we would like to see boosted in industry. It is noticeable that those countries which have been most successful economically are often those in which home ownership levels are not especially high and house prices are not particularly high in terms of the economy. Switzerland is a good example of that.

We must be ready to take swift monetary action if the broad money figures become any lower. That can mean only one of two things—either keeping the base rate down or even lowering it further, in which case I shall make even more money at the bookies than the little bit by which I am ahead already, or being willing to tackle the other end of the interest rate curve, which would be my preferred solution, by reducing the amount to which we fund the deficit so that we get broad money moving again. That course is potentially rocky.

I shall devote the last couple of minutes of my speech to ways in which we can tighten the fiscal position a little further. Like most hon. Members, I believe that a gently expanding money supply and a tightening fiscal position will deliver the non-inflationary growth that we need. First, I firmly believe that we should go the whole hog on social security spending and introduce identity cards and a proper central register, which would be the single most effective way to tackle fraud.

Secondly, as I have proposed in previous debates, and as I have a university in my constituency, we should fund the remarkable growth that we have achieved in higher education by going even further toward student loans. In the long run, grants should be confined only to certain specialist groups such as mature students and those with other special positions.

Thirdly, we must reconsider the scope for legal aid. We have narrowed the group of people who are eligible, but we have not narrowed the type of cases that they can bring. For example, pensioners in my constituency can dispute a garden hedge, and, having spent £20,000 of their own savings, can ask the Treasury to fund the next stage of the dispute—incidentally, the case was brought against a war hero who has lost a leg—at the taxpayer's expense. I find that incredible.

Fourthly, we should look again at home improvement grants, which are frequently paid to people with substantial incomes and which result in a one-off capital gain for those people. Why should not grants be repaid on the sale of the house?

Fifthly, like other hon. Members, I believe that we have to look again at housing benefit, but not by sharpening the taper still further and screwing down still more tightly on

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

those with modest savings. The way to tackle housing benefit is by recognising that we have a largely artificial property market in many areas because most people in rented accommodation in some areas are now on housing benefit. The answer is to limit the amount which councils are allowed to pay, thereby bringing down prevailing rents.

I end where I started. I declared unnecessarily my interest because I thought that it was right to do so. I am betting that we have beaten inflation.

8.33 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): It is rather interesting that no Conservative Member has referred to this as a "feel good" recovery. I refer to it as a "feel no better" recovery, which is certainly an improvement on feeling worse, and probably very much preferred to the "feel good" recovery which ends in inflationary tears. That is not my phrase, it is the phrase of a well- known journalist who writes for *The Guardian*. As he rightly comments, the real question is whether the "feel no better" recovery will fizzle out or end in an inflationary boom.

The problem that we face is the lack of industrial strategy, which is the worrying aspect of the Government's approach. The Chancellor admitted this afternoon that investment in industry is not increasing as he would like. The recovery is being led by consumer spending, not by investment in industry. Too much of our consumption is of goods that are manufactured abroad, which is increasing our trade deficit and producing longer-term inflationary pressures.

Over the past 15 years, we have seen the decimation of our manufacturing industry. That in itself must have shown some of us at least that it is essential to have an industrial strategy that will help to rebuild the desperately needed manufacturing industry. We need a strategy that will help put our people back to work and help to use our skills and expertise to their best advantage.

People are often surprised when I tell them that unemployment in the Cambridge constituency is about the same as the national average. For some reason, people always think that Cambridge is one southern constituency with low unemployment. Some 3,400 people are registered as unemployed in my constituency. The rate is 9 per cent. overall. One reason why unemployment is not much higher than that is that we have good reason to be grateful for the strong growth of the small high-tech firms which have dominated the industrial scene in my area. That has developed despite the Government, rather than because of Government policies.

I should like to talk about the importance of high-tech firms. Although that is not the only small business sector that we should support, it is extremely important because it provides interesting and satisfying work. It is not part of the low-skill, low-tech economy that the Government are trying to promote, and it is an essential way of capitalising on our skills and expertise and enabling manufacturing industry to benefit. Through the promotion of high-tech industry, we can achieve economic growth and increased employment and, at the same time, ensure that our manufacturing industry improves its competitiveness.

Last weekend, Cambridgeshire county council published a survey of 1,000 companies in Cambridgeshire, which showed that there has been 7 per cent. growth in high-tech jobs in the past two years. In the city, more than one in eight of all employees work in high-tech industry, and in the surrounding villages the proportion is one in five or higher. It is a crucial part of our local economy.

In the past two years, an additional 1,900 high-tech jobs have been created, bringing the total to more than 27,000 in the county, including an extra 500 jobs in research and development. Some of those jobs replace jobs that were lost in other sectors, and many of them are financed by European research and development money. Thirty-two per cent. of those jobs are in the city of Cambridge, the great majority of them in my constituency.

Without those jobs, the unemployment rate would treble, and I would be talking about not 9 per cent. but 27 per cent. unemployment. That is higher than the levels in Tottenham, Liverpool, Hackney and Monklands, East—my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) referred to the latter in her maiden speech.

I hope that the Government will take due note of an excellent report that has just been published by the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology. The report, entitled "Innovation and the Tax System", makes several recommendations, some of which I hope that the Government will implement, which have been part of Labour party policy for a long time. It suggests, for instance, a detailed study of the relationship between the UK tax system and the innovative activity of UK-based businesses.

The momentum of innovation depends on access to financial and other resources. The tax system is important in determining post-tax profits from which businesses can finance such innovation. A technology-based firm in my constituency, Xaar, has developed an ink-jet printing system and a range of complementary inks. Several million pounds raised from venture-capital organisations in the UK and Europe have been invested in the development of that technology. Xaar has been successful in seeking licences for its technology, and has concluded agreements with major Japanese office manufacturers, IBM Sweden and, most recently, Zeneca Colours Ltd.

Under the terms of the agreement with Zeneca, together with the Xaar chemists, a programme of joint development to produce top-quality inks to service the market being created by Xaar's printhead manufacturing licensees is being embarked on. The key element of that agreement is the joint development programme, and the transfer of Xaar know-how and technical information.

Xaar was shocked and disappointed to find, when the first payment came in under the licence, that a deduction of 25 per cent. had been made to cover tax. The trouble is that Xaar will not be able to recover that amount until it is in a position to pay corporation tax—which, given the accumulated losses arising from the development, will not be for several years.

Xaar's chairman wrote to tell me of those developments, adding:

"The strangest factor is that had Xaar concluded a deal with an overseas manufacturer then the income would not have been subject to 25 per cent. withholding tax. Even licence fees and royalties from Japan have only 10 per cent. withholding tax."

The chairman makes the following plea:

"We ask the question, why do the UK tax laws seek to penalise companies like Xaar who are engaged in keeping British technology at the forefront of product development."

I believe that our tax system could do a great deal to develop small high-tech firms. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) referred to tax incentives

that would help not only high-tech industry but many of our manufacturing industries. We should recognise that not only investment in research and development, and in equipment and machinery, but investment in people is vital to the future of our industries. We need trained people to fill the jobs that will result from the development of high-tech firms, and we need people who are free to work. Many women in my constituency already have the skills, but cannot work because of child care and other care responsibilities.

We need a strategy that will enable such people to work, will help to develop the high-tech firms that will provide the jobs and will help to turn this "feel no better" recovery into a really "feel good" recovery.

8.42 pm

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): I intend to concentrate on public finances. The Chancellor's summer economic forecast reveals much improvement in our general economy: the first 41 pages show a recovery over the past 18 months which is projected to continue in the medium term—a recovery based on a low-inflation environment.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottoway), who welcomed the openness initiative in monetary policy to which the forecast refers. The publication of the minutes of the monthly meetings between the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England are a significant development, in terms of both accountability and the quality of advice on monetary policy that is likely to be presented. More openness in government is likely to strengthen our institutions rather than weaken them.

So much for the first 41 pages of the forecast. The remaining nine, which deal with our public finances, paint a much less sanguine picture. Opposition Members have called for more public spending today, although they have not quantified the increase for which they have asked. Contrary to some of what we have heard from them, however, both the Red Book and the summer economic forecast reveal that public spending is alive and well, and expanding in the British economy. Despite the best efforts of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the controlled total over the past three years has risen by some 10.9 per cent. in real terms.

Earlier today, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor attributed that increase to the recession, but I suspect that economic historians will not regard all of it as having arisen in that way. They will probably conclude that it is also due to the Government's efforts to offset the over-tight monetary policy that resulted from our membership of the exchange rate mechanism with a more lax fiscal policy.

As a Conservative, I do not support increased state intervention in the form of higher public expenditure when Governments follow inappropriate monetary policies. Boosting public expenditure is very easy and apparently popular in the short term, but it is very difficult to bring it down again in a modern democracy. Lobbyists and interest groups will fight to ensure that spending levels remain the same or rise, whatever the national interest demands.

So what of the future? Table 2.2 of the summer economic forecast, on page 43, shows that general Government expenditure over the next two years is set to increase from £278 billion to £310 billion—an increase of some £30 billion; a cash increase of 11 per cent., and a real-terms increase of some 6 per cent. in a low-inflation climate.

The figures show other worrying trends. For instance, cyclical social security is planned to increase further in the coming years. That seems strange when we are experiencing above-trend economic growth: at such a time, cyclical social security would be expected to fall. As for the total social security budget, over the next two years it is due to rise to more than £90 billion. It is difficult to understand the magnitude of that figure; perhaps it would be simpler if it were expressed as the amount of tax that would have to be raised from the average family to pay for it. The average amount of tax levied on the average family to meet that social security burden would be some £4,500 per annum .

I believe that reform of social security spending is now essential. The scope and size of that budget must be reined in. As long as we put off fundamental reform of social security, our reputation for firm control of public spending and our ability to create a low-tax environment will be in danger.

When Beveridge produced his White Paper on social security, he said that the great danger was that men might become comfortable and settle down to benefits. That is the position we are in—men have settled down to benefits. The social security system that has evolved for 50 years has not helped good neighbourliness, but has set neighbour against neighbour. So often, we hear of people complaining about neighours who exploit the benefit system while they pay the taxes.

Too generous a benefit system also stops people from going back to work. The most important ingredient in getting people back to work is net take-home pay after tax, which determines the supply of labour. If people find that they receive more on benefit than they would in net take-home pay, their determination to find work will obviously falter.

In recent months, there has been significant discussion and argument about whether the United Kingdom economy can combine European welfarism and American free-market efficiency. If one accepts such a proposition, it has some inconsistencies. Free-market efficiency requires a low-tax system, whereas welfarism pre-empts the nation's resources. Even in Britain today, the state is pre-empting more than 44p in every pound of private sector resources.

Deregulated labour markets are not enough. Low tax is a necessary prerequisite for a successful free-enterprise economy. High welfare spending is not a part of that virtuous circle. High public spending usually leads to high public deficits and high long-term real interest rates, because the markets want a risk premium for the money they lend to spendthrift Governments.

We have an agenda that we must adhere to during the next two years, and we must ensure that low taxation is at its heart. To achieve such low taxation, firm control of public expenditure cannot be mere rhetoric: it has to be a commitment that we are determined to deliver. A social security budget of £90 billion must be reformed.

Last week, we heard from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that Government running costs are £20 billion a year, or £1,000 a year for every family in this country. We must focus on reducing these levels of public spending during the remainder of this Parliament, because a low-tax economy must be an obligation that we do not dishonour.

8.52 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) on her impressive and forceful debut in this place. I know that my new hon. Friend will be a great credit to her predecessor.

The Chancellor forecast a golden vista of his creation —rising investment, low inflation, reduced public borrowing and lower taxes. To the public, he says, "All this and more can be yours, if only you vote Tory next time." If he thinks that the public will be so easily conned, he is wrong. They know that such forecasts come from the same crew who failed to predict the Lawson boom, ruled out the possibility of a recession, did not foresee sterling's exit from the exchange rate mechanism, and denied the need for tax increases before the last general election. Their record for forecasts is abysmal, and their record on economic management is worse.

It is true that we are climbing out of recession, but that is part of the economic cycle. It would have happened sooner if the Government had got their policies right. We stayed in recession longer than most other countries. The economic cycle meant that we were bound to come out of recession eventually, as we came out of the 1981 recession, but the Government's stewardship has left the economy in a bad state to take advantage of recovery, just as it did after the 1981 recession.

The Government cannot even claim that the recovery is a result of the success of their policies, because it is clearly the result of the failure of the policy that they set out at the last general election. The present Prime Minister was Chancellor when he took us into the ERM at an unsustainable exchange rate. It was an appalling judgment. We entered the ERM at the wrong time, the wrong rate, and for all the wrong reasons.

Massive damage was done to our manufacturing base, and a million jobs were lost as the then Chancellor, now the Prime Minister, sought to sustain what was unsustainable. Even those people such as myself, who believed that the principle of the ERM was right, knew that that exchange rate was not sustainable. Once forced to abandon their preferred policy, the Government found that a slow recovery began. Their false judgments created the recession, the damage to manufacturing and now, paradoxically, the recovery.

The budget deficit, which produced value added tax on fuel and car and home insurance, and a new airport tax, was created by the fiscal irresponsibilities of the 1980s and 1990s—primarily, by tax cuts at the wrong time, and again for the wrong reasons. I well remember the forecast that the Lawson boom would lead to prosperity. The reality was boom, bust and job losses, and it will be again, because this Chancellor does not get his judgments right, either.

Value added tax on fuel was introduced because we supposedly had a £50 billion deficit. That was his forecast and his judgment, but he was wrong. The deficit was £46 billion. He did not need to introduce VAT on fuel; pensioners and the poor did not have to be hit in that way.

The Chancellor made the wrong judgment in imposing an unnecessary burden on people, so will he remove it? He would not agree even to fail to impose the second stage of VAT on fuel when he came before the Treasury Select Committee. I suggested to him that there was no more need for the tax. He said, "Well, we're going to do it anyway."

Like his leader, who took us into the ERM at the wrong rate, this Chancellor decides when confronted with realities that the best thing to do is to ignore the pain they cause, and carry on regardless. It is the same sort of attitude that he displays towards the fundamental problems of the economy—he ignores them. The result is that the recovery is not sound.

Yesterday, David Hardisty of the Finance and Leasing Association said:

"Confidence is still fragile, because there is no feel good factor at the moment. The tax rises, low wage settlements, static house prices and fear of unemployment mean people do not feel their economic situation is improving."

Sixty-three per cent. of the association's members were no more confident about their prospects this month than they were in February.

The housing market is a particular problem. In paragraph 3.28 of the Red Book, the Chancellor predicted:

"Increasing confidence should lead to higher activity and prices in 1994."

He got that wrong, too, as he admitted to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The failure of the housing market is probably due to three factors: first, confidence in recovery is weak; secondly, the Governor of the Bank of England has predicted that interest rates will rise later this month, which deters borrowers; and, thirdly, taking out a 25-year mortgage is based on the principle of being able to pay for it, and uninterrupted employment.

The new insecurity and uncertainty in the job market caused by the removal of many employment rights means that people are less likely to enter into large loans, because they are not sure that they will be able to pay them. The housing market may not be the same ever again while current Government policies continue. That will affect the need for a mood of confidence which the Chancellor predicted but which, again, has not materialised.

There is also no real evidence that the Chancellor has created one extra full-time job. That was the consensus view not only of the distinguished panel of economists who advise the Select Committee, but of his panel of independent advisers, who said in paragraph 13 of their report on the summer economic forecast:

"Full-time employment has continued to fall."

It is true that people are coming off benefits, but that is for three reasons: first, changes in the benefit rules, especially on invalidity benefit; secondly, more young people are going into education; and, thirdly, the creation of more part-time jobs. However, the statistics show that full-time jobs are still not being created, and, as the Chancellor's advisers said, full-time employment has continued to fall. There are also concerns about the sort of jobs that are being created and the sort of full-time jobs that might be created, hopefully, in due course.

If recovery is to be sustained in the long term, we need an export-led recovery; we need a recovery primarily in manufacturing. The damage to our manufacturing base in the recent recession has been enormous, but as Professor Christopher Johnson pointed out, the damage to manufacturing investment under the Tories has been long-term, rather than only during the current recession. During the period 1982 to 1992, while capital stock in finance and business rose by 107 per cent., in trade and tourism by 57 per cent. and in other services by an average of 38 per cent., capital stock growth in manufacturing industry was only 14 per cent. That has left manufacturing weak over the past decade.

As the Chancellor's economic forecast acknowledges, that has led the Confederation of British Industry, in its measure of capital utilisation, to say that the manufacturing sector is already close to its normal level of utilisation. There is little spare capacity left in manufacturing; spare capacity is in other sectors. That means that, even if we are able to bring ourselves slowly out of recession and into recovery, the manufacturing demand is unlikely to be able to met domestically, and we will have to import products.

If we are not careful, and if there are no changes in policy, we are then looking at a balance of payments problem, certainly in the next year. Manufacturing is fundamentally weak, after years of neglect. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has called for policies to encourage investment in manufacturing, and to tackle the skills deficit in Britain.

Any modern western economy should have managed a sustained growth rate of 2.2 per cent. over the past decade or more. We did that before 1979; we should have been able to do it after 1979. As Professor Johnson has shown, an output gap has grown since 1979. Under the Conservatives, the economy has gone from boom to bust, but throughout that period it has under-performed.

Professor Johnson predicts that the current massive output gap will take five years or more to close, even at the current rate of growth. It will take five years of the current growth rate to take us to where we should have been if there had been prudent stewardship of our economy. It is a miserable record. In the 1990s, the growth rate is likely to be an average of only 1.6 per cent.

We also have the highest taxes on record. The Conservatives like to say that they are the party of low taxation, and argue that the present tax rises are a temporary hiccup. However, that is not true. Recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) gave the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee statistics from the Library of the House. Their effect was devastating.

In 1978-79, the ratio of tax to gross domestic product was 34.3 per cent. In every year up to 1993-94, it was a higher proportion of gross domestic product than in 1978-79. This year, it is 34 per cent., but it is set to rise to 37 per cent. in 1994-95 and 1995-96. That is not a temporary phenomenon or a hiccup.

If hon. Members think that the statistics for 1978-79 are somehow or other an aberration as far as the Labour Government were concerned, it is the case that the figures for 1975-76, 1976-77 and 1977-78 were also lower than for almost every year under the Conservatives. The data show that it is simply a myth that the Conservatives tax less than Labour. It is true that the Conservatives tax the rich less than Labour, but, for the working class and for middle-income families, Labour's tax policies not only cost less but are more progressive and fair.

A married couple on average earnings with two children in 1978-1979 paid 34.2 per cent. of their earnings in direct and indirect taxation. In only one year from then until 1992-1993 does the proportion fall below that, and that was 1979-1980, following a Labour tax cut. In every single year since 1980, a typical family has been taxed higher under the Conservatives.

That leaves the debatable point about whether Labour would or would not have taxed higher than the Conservatives in the 1980s. But it is not debatable that, since 1979, under Mrs. Thatcher and the present Prime Minister, the Tories have taxed more than Labour Governments.

The Chancellor cannot be relied upon to get it right. His judgment is unsound, and he and his predecessors have made too many bad judgments in the past. He has no clear view of where he is going, he has not addressed the fundamental problems of the economy, and he does not have solutions for those problems. The Conservatives seem to see their only hope in trying to extend the policies of the 1980s—the "me decade"—into the latter half of the 1990s, no matter that tax cutting and trickle-down economics were supposed to lift all the boats, but have instead lifted only the yachts and damaged the harbour in the process.

Labour rejects that. We want to move from the "me decade" policies and to make the 1990s the "we decade". We say that, unless the many prosper, none will. It is for that reason that I say that the electorate will not be conned again by the Chancellor's predictions of prosperity. The Government have got it wrong far too often, and they have got it wrong again. The electorate know that, and they will reject them.

9.6 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute briefly to this interesting debate. I have sat through virtually all the speeches and I have listened to them with considerable attention.

Speaking at this time of the evening, and looking at the open green Benches, reminds me of the old saying, "If you want to keep a secret, make a Back-Bench speech." There is no doubt that it is somewhat difficult to speak at this time of night.

I was going to make three main points, but I shall confine myself to one, for reasons of brevity. I wanted say some nice things about the growth of the economy, but those points have already been made adequately by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I shall content myself with making one practical suggestion by way of an early Budget representation to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and to his colleagues on the Treasury Bench.

One of the besetting difficulties in our economy since the war—perhaps for longer—has been the relatively low level, and sometimes also the poor quality, of the investment made in the economy. There has also been rather too low a level of aggregate savings which have been put aside by all sectors of the economy towards that investment. The time has come for the Government, and Parliament as a whole, to try to make a constructive contribution to rectifying that situation, or at any rate to lean against the national malaise of inadequate aggregate savings.

I shall quote one or two figures which relate to the time that the Government have been in office, from 1979 to the most recent available date. Total savings as a percentage of GDP moved from 23.1 per cent. in 1979 to 13.5 per cent. in 1993—a rather depressing decline.

If one looks, for example, at the international figures and compares our record with those of Japan and Germany, one finds that in roughly the same period—in this case, the figures relate to 1979 to 1992—Japan's gross national savings as a percentage of its GDP stayed roughly constant at 31.5 per cent. in 1979 and 33.9 per cent. in 1992. In

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

Germany, the figures were 22.8 per cent. in the first year and 22.7 per cent. in the second year. The United Kingdom's figures were 19 per cent. in the first year and 12.8 per cent. in the second year. I therefore want some measures to be taken not just in the forthcoming Budget but in succeeding ones to help to rectify that situation.

On the personal side, it is very important not to attack the tax regime for institutional savings, because we shall all need the efficiency and positive contribution made by such savings to thrive and grow in order to achieve the other objectives of Government policy in the sphere of occupational pensions. Rather, my right hon. and learned Friend would do well to consider introducing an overall tax incentive for any form of personal savings up to a maximum of, for example, £10,000 in a given tax year, which would be completely neutral as between one savings product and another. In the context of the move towards self-assessment, it could be self-certified by the taxpayer, subject to rigorous spot checks and fierce penalties from the Inland Revenue.

That should increase the aggregate level of personal savings in the economy, reduce the need for savings churning between different novelty products and encourage the old habit of direct equity or bond investments by individuals. If properly channelled by institutions and properly used by companies—obviously it is not just the quantity of investment, but the quality and the direction of it which matters—it should produce a higher level of overall investment in our economy.

If my colleagues on the Front Bench want to learn more about this idea—if they are not already up to speed on it—I commend to them a recent publication by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which put forward an idea similar to the one that I have outlined. I believe that it would be in the national interest to pursue this idea.

9.10 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): The argument in the debate centres on a fundamental difference of analysis of the state of the economy and a fundamental difference of view about the role of Government in the economy. The Opposition believe that the economy remains fundamentally weak and that the power of Government must be used to address that weakness. The Government tell us that the economy is doing just fine and that all they have to do is carry on as they are.

Rarely during an economic debate can such a contrast have been drawn between the picture that the Chancellor painted of the economic background and the daily reality that faces the people of Britain. Listening to Ministers today is like eavesdropping on the inhabitants of a different world.

The terms of the Government's motion celebrates their victory in the battle against unemployment, but in the real world, and according to the Government's own reckoning, the number of people in employment is actually falling, and still 2.6 million people remain unemployed.

The Chancellor tells us that we have an economic recovery that is the envy of Europe. Britain, of course, went earliest into recession and has, therefore, emerged before our competitors, but the effects of the recession have been far more severe here than those experienced elsewhere. That is why the OECD's forecast predicts that, between 1990 and the end of 1995, the economy of Britain will grow at a slower rate than that of any other G7 country and at a slower rate than that of any other European Union country and that our economy will grow at less than half the average of those of OECD countries. That is why it is only in the make-believe world of Ministers that we are the envy of our competitors.

Ministers trumpet Britain's improved competitiveness, but the reality is that our trade deficit is the worst in the European Union and we are second from bottom in the OECD skills league table. That is the dream world in which Ministers are living—the dream world in which they can talk about tax cuts even as they impose the biggest tax rises in history and ordinary families face 10 more tax rises still to come. No wonder the Chancellor can detect no feel-good factor. People do not feel good about tax increases; they feel betrayed. They do not feel good about their employment prospects; they feel insecure. They do not feel good about economic recovery, because they do not believe it.

Moreover, people know that Britain's current economic weakness is reflected in a history of failures that stretches back to 1979 and embraces every aspect of economic performance. I am not talking the country down, but telling it straight. The Conservatives have failed on key tests set not by their opponents but by themselves.

Mr. Butterfill: If the hon. Lady does not believe the Government's statistics, she may believe those produced by the Library. Page 3 of the research paper that the Library produced for this debate shows the pattern for industrial production. Under the last Labour Government, industrial production fell rapidly between 1974 and 1976, and returned to its original level only in 1979 whereas, under this Government from 1980 to 1990, there was considerable recovery and we are now back to the record levels of 1990.

Ms Harman: The hon. Gentleman should look at what is happening in other countries. Manufacturing output in this country has grown by a mere 4 per cent. since 1979. Compare that with the record in America, where it has grown by 30 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman wants to take manufacturing output as an indicator, he should be extremely concerned about that fact.

The Conservatives have failed their own tests on borrowing, public spending and taxation. The story is one of ignominious retreat from their explicit promises.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The hon. Lady specifically mentioned borrowing. Does she remember the great man, Dr. Johannes Witteveen, a director of the International Monetary Fund, who presided over the bailing out of the last Labour Government? I cannot remember the name of the gentleman who presided over the bailing out of the previous Labour Government. However, no Conservative Government have ever borrowed as much, as a proportion of GDP, as the last two Labour Governments. Labour Members are concerned only with increasing Government spending, which must have the same result.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Ms Harman: Ministers say "Hear, hear", but the right hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong. This Government have borrowed record amounts. Back in 1988, when the Prime Minister was Chief Secretary, he promised a zero

PSBR year on year. The people who promised to end borrowing altogether have now become the biggest Government borrowers in history and lamely propose that they may eliminate Government borrowing by the end of the century.

On public spending, which the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) also mentioned, the Government made two promises: to protect investment yet, at the same time, reduce overall public spending. But they have done neither. They have cut investment in the economy and public services, but failed to reduce overall spending.

The Government's most notorious and humiliating failure of all is on tax. People now pay more tax than they did in 1979. The Conservatives said nothing equivocal on tax in the general election campaign. They specifically promised income tax cuts. Moreover, they promised them year on year. They ruled out a rise in national insurance and promised not to put VAT on fuel. As we know, all those specific promises have been cynically broken. Now, the best that they can do is offer us, as the Chancellor has today, their instinct to cut tax. They are like a football team that promises to bring home the world cup and, having been humiliated in the qualifying round, comes home and tells the public about its instinct for scoring goals.

The Government's failure on the economy lies at the heart of all their other failures. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) addressed that failure in her maiden speech. She showed the strength of character and determination that will clearly make her an asset to her constituents. She spoke of her deference in following in John Smith's footsteps, and I am sure that the whole House will agree that he would have been proud of her speech.

For 15 years, the Tories have tried to present issues of spending, tax and borrowing in isolation from the state of the real economy, but the truth is that economic performance is crucial to performance on borrowing, on spending and on tax. That is why the Government have not succeeded, and will never succeed, even by their own standards.

It is the Government's failure on the economy which has sent the public sector borrowing requirement soaring to record levels. Economic failure has meant that the cost of keeping people unemployed has trebled, and the Government have responded by cutting investment. Economic failure means that, with more people unemployed, everyone has to pay more tax.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asked exactly the right questions about tax. He said, "The question is, what is it for and who pays?" The answers, under the present Government, are, "What is it for? It is to pay the price of economic failure", and "Who pays? Middle and lower income families."

That record of failure obviously was not inevitable. It was not some unfortunate accident. It is the direct result, the product, of an economic dogma that simply has not worked—a dogma which says that the Government can play no positive role in the economy, and says that Britain can compete only as a low-wage, low-skill economy, with a weakened welfare state left to pick up the pieces.

That dogma stands condemned by the Tories' record of failure. It must be replaced by an approach that uses the power of Government to ensure investment for the future, which recognises that some markets need a regulatory framework that will foster economic success, and which has at its heart the commitment, which my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) mentioned, to a high-tech, high-investment, high-skill, high-wage economy to give people economic opportunity, and a welfare state that gives people pathways out of poverty.

Some Ministers, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, are trying to shift their ground, but remember, his is a party which said that unemployment is a price worth paying, and believed that manufacturing did not matter. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) reminded the House, with the benefit of his experience, as he always does, that our economy has not prospered without a strong manufacturing base.

Have these Tories really changed? The answer is of course no, because although their words are changing, their actions are not. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) made it clear that the Government still believe that unemployment has nothing to do with them, and that their rhetoric on full employment is meaningless.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way; she is very kind. Before she gets too carried away with Labour's prospect of spending its way out of recession, were it ever to be in government, does she recall the memorable words of Lord Callaghan, the last Labour Prime Minister—in perhaps every sense—who said to the Labour party conference in 1976:

"I tell you in all candour, comrades, you cannot spend your way out of a recession"?

He was referring to public spending.

Ms Harman: The Government have failed to cut p blic spending, although they have cut investment, because they are spending more on the consequences of their economic failure. The history of the Tories' economic policy is failure destined to repeat itself, first as the tragedy of two recessions, followed by the farce of a Government trumpeting their success as they create the conditions for yet more failure.

For the Government, recovery is simply the absence of recession, but recovery, if it is to be sustained, must be more than that. They have not conquered the economic problems that they have created. They have not ended the pattern of boom and bust that my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) so excellently described. This fragile recovery is nothing more than an interval between the first two Tory recessions and the one that is yet to come.

Just as the Chancellor is trying to change the mood music on economic policy, so he has tried to change it on social policy. While the Chief Secretary still says that Government action undermines individual responsibility, the Chancellor has started to speak about a strong welfare system.

The Chancellor has every reason to be embarrassed by the Government's record on social policy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why"?] Conservative Members should look at the Government's own figures, which show that since 1979 the income of the poorest one tenth of the population, in real terms, has actually fallen by 17 per cent. while that of the richest has increased by 62 per cent. That is the direct result of an economic strategy based fairly and squarely on high unemployment and low wages. It is the direct result of a tax policy based on tax loopholes for the super-rich and tax increases for low-paid and middle-income families. It is the direct result of a social policy based on cutting benefits.

Just as the Government's economic strategy remains unchanged so, too, their tax and social policies remain

[Ms Harman]

unchanged. It was the Chancellor who insisted on going ahead with VAT on fuel—and still, despite the outcry in the country and despite its obvious unfairness, he refuses to cancel the increase from 8 to 17.5 per cent. He still refuses to end the tax privileges for the rich, such as executive share option schemes that give the richest people thousands of pounds in untaxed income. Meanwhile, the Government's policy of punishing the poor remains unchanged, cutting invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit—and now housing benefit is also on the hit list.

At the heart of Tory economic policy has been the commitment to cut public spending and we heard much about that in the debate. In 1979, the Conservative manifesto asserted:

"The state takes too much of the nation's income: its share must be steadily reduced."

The Government have not done that. Public spending is 44 per cent. of gross domestic product now and it was 44 per cent. of GDP in 1979. It is no lower now than it was when the Tories took office in 1979. That is not because they have been investing in a stronger economy; it is not because they have been modernising the health service or giving us a state-of-the-art transportation system—far from it.

The Tories are not spending less as a percentage of GDP, but what they have done is to change the composition of public spending. More is being spent on the costs of economic failure and less on investing for economic opportunity and success. They pay out income support for the growing number of single parents instead of ensuring the provision of nursery places so that they can go out to work. They pay out unemployment benefit to the unemployed instead of ensuring investment in skills to help them to get a job.

In the face of the Government's inability successfully to manage the economy, Tory public spending, instead of being a springboard for economic success, has become increasingly a palliative for economic failure. It is not that this Tory Government have been short of public money to spend. They have had £118 billion of North sea oil receipts and they have squandered it. They have had £69 billion of privatisation receipts and they have squandered it.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Harman: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once and I will not do so again.

The Government have lacked not public money, but an understanding of how to use it in the public interest. People are paying tax increases not to invest in success in the future but to pay the price of the Government's past failure. The truth is that the Tories are no more the party of low public spending than they are the party of low tax. Everywhere they turn, they are confronted with the consequences of their failure and their inability to deal with that.

At this time of crisis for them, the message goes forth from Tory central office, "Fellow Conservatives. Ask not what can you do for your country. Ask who in the country you can blame." So they target the victims of their policies. Unemployment, homelessness and poverty, which the Government created, are the fault of the unemployed, the homeless and the poor. Insidiously, they invite the voters, the general public, to blame those groups, to divert anger away from the Government.

The Chief Secretary, however, goes one step further. He does not simply blame the victims for the public dissatisfaction with the Government. He goes beyond the middlemen. He blames the voters themselves. As he put it in a recent interview, the reason why the Tories now trail Labour on tax among the electorate is because

"their judgment has become clouded".

Britain is plagued by a muddled electorate—it is their confusion which is responsible for the Government's unpopularity. At this point, I know that some of my hon. Friends will suggest that the confusion lies not with the electorate but in the Chief Secretary's own head. Undaunted, however, he comes back with more revealing insights.

The voters, he says, are flawed in other ways, too. They are not merely confused. They have also become cynical. According to the Chief Secretary's preachings, voters no longer

"respect those who lead and manage them."

Then, last month, from his speech in Spain, we learned that the voices in his head told him that he must speak out again, this time about a great threat to democracy. Apparently—I shall translate, because by this time he was speaking in tongues—

"Voters feel they own their government, and since they feel they own it, they believe it should do what they want."

In common with the people who walk up and down Oxford street with sandwich boards on their backs proclaiming, "The end is nigh" or that "Protein is the root of all evil" the Chief Secretary believes, I am sure, that the world will one day wake up to his perspective.

But perhaps it is not fair to single out the Chief Secretary, because there are other forms of delusion equally worthy of our attention. Everyone knows, for example, about the worrying influence of computer games and the consequent blurring of fantasy and reality. But an even more ominous phenomenon is emerging—virtual reality headsets. One just puts one on and enters a fantasy world where one can make anything happen.

So now we know why Ministers are so removed from the real world. They sit around the Cabinet table every Thursday morning, and when talk of traffic cones and service station toilets fails to distract them from the mountains of problems that are too painful to be faced, they get out their headsets and enter a world of their own creation. They press their control pads and the unemployed are made to disappear. At the touch of a button, our ailing economy rematerialises—this time as the envy of the world. With a deft swivel of their joy sticks, the law of gravity is reversed and taxes appear to be falling, even as they are soaring upwards.

But the problem for Ministers is that no one else lives in virtual reality. Everyone else lives in the real world: the world of falling living standards, economic failure, social division and rising taxes. *[Interruption.]* I see that a Conservative Member has such a headset on even now. People bitterly resent a Government who say that everything is fine when, clearly, it is not.

This summer economic debate comes at the end of an historic parliamentary Session. The Government have been exposed on their tax record, exposed for their deceit on tax, exposed for their unfairness on tax and exposed as the perpetrators of the biggest tax rise in history. The Tory's last remaining electoral weapon—the myth of low tax—

has been taken from them. They failed on economic policy and social policy. Despite their pretence that everything is fine, they know that they have failed.

That is why some of them are tentatively moving on to Labour's ground. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, they are: all this talk about full employment—not in here, but out there—and about community. But Labour's language will not work for the Tories. Bear that in mind. It will not work because people who are worried about unemployment will not look to the party that has created mass unemployment. People who care about modernising the welfare state will not look to a party that has undermined it. People who want a strong economy will not look to a party that has weakened it.

People have made it clear in local council elections and European elections that they no longer trust the Tories. There has been an historic shift in the allegiance of the British people. They are now ready to entrust their future to Labour.

9.35 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir Terence Higgins) and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) complained that there were too few opportunities to discuss the economy. During the course of the afternoon we have heard a series of interesting speeches on the economy from my right hon. and hon. Friends and, indeed, from some Opposition Members.

Unfortunately, we did not hear any explanation from the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen of what the Labour party's economic policies might be. For the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), in the dying moments of her speech just before it fizzled out, to talk about the Conservatives wanting to move on to Labour's ground, when it was perfectly clear from the whole debate that there was no ground to move on to, really took the biscuit.

I pay tribute to one speech from the Labour side. The hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) made her maiden speech. It was a speech full of personal modesty. The House will have appreciated the tribute that she paid to her predecessor, John Smith. It was a speech of substantial eloquence and she showed her keenness to serve her constituents. I wish her well with her parliamentary career.

The hon. Member for Monklands, East paid a great deal of attention to the need to create jobs in her constituency. She put particular emphasis on the need for small businesses to develop in her constituency and to do well. I would say to her that for that to be the case, there has to be confidence, and confidence is what the Government have been restoring by their economic policies.

I want to make a speech to close the debate which is about principles, specific policies, achievements and a programme to make sure that our economy is strong and that there can be confidence in that economy. I shall contrast our approach at every step with the lack of policy from the Labour party.

I wish to detail the steps that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and I have worked at to restore confidence in British economic management. We have done it under the headings of monetary policy, public spending and fiscal policy. I want to talk about all three.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the things that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) said was factually incorrect according to the information from the Library? She said that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecasters had said that our growth would be lower than that of other countries. The Library research paper shows on page 19 that our growth will be higher than almost any other OECD country in terms of GDP for both the present year and 1995. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that that is correct?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. The prospects are that we shall have the highest growth rate of any major European Union country this year and next.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: No. I want to get on.

The reason why we have a monetary policy is that we believe that the basis of economic confidence and stability must be low and sustained low inflation. We believe that it is essential for social cohesion that there should be low inflation. That is why we have set specific targets which say that the underlying rate of inflation will be kept between 1 and 4 per cent. and that we will be in the lower half of that range at the end of this Parliament.

That is why we have laid out the other factors that we shall bear in mind in judging whether monetary conditions are right or whether they need to be tightened or loosened. We have referred to asset prices, to monitoring the money supply and exchange rate, and to watching a range of other factors to identify inflationary pressures. We want to make it clear that interest rates in this country will be set according to economic conditions in this country and not according to economic conditions in other countries. We want to make it clear that interest rates will be set in this country for economic reasons and not for political reasons.

That is why we have embarked on making our monetary policy ever more transparent, publishing the monthly monetary report, setting up the independent panel of forecasters, publishing the minutes of meetings between my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England when they discuss monetary policy. That is why the OECD has paid tribute to the steps that we have taken to establish that monetary policy framework and has described the publication of the minutes as a significant step forward.

That is why my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) made such a point of referring to the importance of low inflation.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: No, I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has not been here for the debate.

The second heading under which I want to deal with our policies for creating confidence is public spending. We believe that the Government's control of their spending is critical to confidence in that Government. One cannot have confidence in a Government unless they are able to control their spending.

Conservative Members believe strongly that the Government and the state are there to serve the individual and that it should not be the other way around. That is why we believe that a Government who are spending 45 per

[Mr. Portillo]

cent. of gross domestic product need to reduce that proportion progressively year by year. We believe that the citizen is the customer of the Government and that he must be given good services and good value for money. We recognise that taxpayers, whose money the Labour party would spend with such alacrity, are not well off and may be much less well off than the people to whom the money is being given, which has been removed from taxpayers.

We believe that controlling public spending is vital for the competitiveness of this country. Although the Government are spending about 45 per cent. of our national income, the Governments of the great competitors—the United States of America and Japan—are spending no more than about a third of their national incomes. That is why we have embarked on a process for the complete control of public spending. That is why, despite the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), I believe that we have achieved considerable successes.

In the Budget, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor was able to announce that the plans for this year had been reduced by £3.5 billion. That came on top of the reduction in the previous autumn statement and it means that the plans for this year are £8.25 billion below the level at which they were set in the 1991 public expenditure survey. We have taken £15 billion off the plans for the three years of the public expenditure survey.

I have set out the Government's belief in low inflation. I have set out our monetary targets. I have set out our inflation targets. I have set out achievements in public spending. I would like to know from the Labour party whether it believes that inflation should be higher. Does it believe that the monetary targets are wrong? Does it believe that we are following the wrong inflation indicators? Does it believe that publication of the minutes of meetings between the Governor of the Bank of England and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor should not be published? Does it believe that public spending is too high? Does it believe that it is too low? Will the Labour party please tell us what its principles are?

I can tell the House specifically what our principles, our goals and our achievements are. That is why I say to my hon. Friends who are concerned about the level of public spending that they should remember that we are planning for a rate of growth of only 0.25 per cent. per year in real terms for the three years of the public expenditure survey.

We have been able to find, however, more money for health, more money for education and more money for pensioners. That is because the Government have, as my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) have been urging us to do, controlled the growth of the social security budget and turned our attention in particular to social security fraud. It is because we have reformed the social security system to ensure that it is better targeted, because we have put great emphasis on increased efficiency in public services and because we have tightly controlled our own costs in government that we shall reduce the proportion of national income taken by the Government to 42.5 per cent.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover) *rose—*

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has not been here, but I shall give way to him.

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Does he agree that public expenditure control is paramount and that when decisions are taken in government, such as to remove the Royal Marines school of music from Deal, a proper investment appraisal should always be undertaken first? Does he agree?

Mr. Portillo: Of course a proper appraisal should be made. If my hon. Friend has any point to pursue about that, he should do so with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Portillo: No; the hon. Gentleman has not been here.

Ms Harman: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the point about public spending, will he explain why in 1979 public spending as a percentage of GDP was 44 per cent. and yet, after 15 years of Tory government, it is still 44 per cent. of GDP? Can he explain that to his colleagues?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady should be ashamed to remind the House that she offered us 44 per cent. as a proportion of national income at a time when the economy was in recovery, at the end of a boom period. We are at 44 per cent. following a recession. The average figure under the Labour party was 46.5 per cent. During the 1980s, when we had a period of strong recovery for a number of years, we got it down to 38 per cent. Would the hon. Lady now like to commit herself to getting it down to 38 per cent., or to any figure at all? Is she saying that 44 per cent. is too high, or that, as it was the figure under Labour, it is the figure that she supports? I am prepared to tell her that I think that the figure is too high, and we are determined to reduce it. What is her policy, please?

Ms Harman: Too much public expenditure in this country goes on mopping up the consequences of this Government's economic failure. We see spending on unemployment, on poverty—on income support—and on housing benefit because of their failures on economic policy and their failure in housing policy. We see investment being cut. Is that the pattern of public spending that the right hon. Gentleman expects us to applaud as a success? I think not.

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Lady believes that unemployment is too high and if, as I understand it, she is saying that she would cut unemployment and that that would solve all her problems, why is it that a country like France, which has a minimum wage—the policy that she advocates—has a rate of unemployment higher than Britain's? Why is it that Sweden, which spends 72 per cent. of national income through government—a country that follows the policies advocated by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)— has a high rate of unemployment? Why is it that Spain, which has a socialist government, has a rate of unemployment of 25 per cent. and a rate of youth unemployment of 40 per cent.? I will tell her why. It is because Spain has had 10 years of socialist government, and the only reason why there is any hope for the people of Spain is that the leader of the Spanish Opposition is charismatic, is 41 years old, was born in 1953 and is a Conservative.

I now want to deal with fiscal policy. We believe in controlling the rate of Government borrowing because we

are aware that the borrowing that we pass on from this Parliament is a burden that must be paid for by our children. That could lead to permanently higher rates of taxation or fewer choices for our people. We have taken decisive action—more decisive action than, I believe, any other Government, to control our rate of public borrowing.

As a consequence, the PSBR as a proportion of our national income will reduce from 7·25 per cent. last year to 5·25 per cent. this year and to 4 per cent. next year.

Most importantly, the ratio of the debt that we have accumulated over the years to our GDP will not pass 50 per cent. whereas in Greece it is now 104 per cent., in Italy it is 116 per cent. and in Belgium it is 145 per cent. The only EC country which has a lower ratio of debt to GDP than we have is Luxembourg. That point may be of interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) who was interested in the appointment of Mr. Santer.

All the policies that I have described, policies which are backed by principles and which are very clear, have been endorsed recently by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In its voluminous report, one policy after another followed by this Conservative Government has been vindicated, upheld, praised and underpinned by the OECD.

We remember perfectly well that, under the Labour Government, the British economy was run by the International Monetary Fund. Under this Conservative Government, the economy and its economic management are praised by the OECD. That is the difference between the two.

We now have the fastest rise in retail sales of any major European Union country. We have the fastest rate of growth of GDP of any major European Union country. We have the fastest growth in industrial production of any major European Union country.

In the European Union this year, only in this country is unemployment falling. Inflation is below the European Union average. Interest rates are among the lowest in the European Union. Manufacturing output is up 3.2 per cent. this year, car production is up 3 per cent. and export volumes are up 9 per cent.

I can tell the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) that there is no fantasy in all that. They are solid achievements brought about by sound economic policies. They are solid achievements which could be brought about only by a Government who have principles and the courage to stick to those principles and the policies that are derived from those principles.

We have established the stable economic conditions and the conditions of low inflation that enable unemployment to be reduced and employment to be increased. Over the years, we have shown the courage to tackle the vested interests, including the trade unions, in order to create flexible labour markets.

Against what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, the winter labour force survey shows that there are 150,000 more jobs in the United Kingdom than there were a year ago and that the number of people in employment is rising. He knows perfectly well that the proportion of our working age population in work is now the highest of any major European Union country. Those are facts to which the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East and for Peckham should pay tribute. If they cannot do that, at least they should say what their policies are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) described the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East as disappointing. I believe that it was closer to being disgraceful. I read in *The Daily Telegraph* this morning a comment of Mrs. Blair. She was paying tribute to her husband, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and, in paying tribute to her husband, she said that he was able to cook, change nappies and discuss economic policy over the telephone with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East all at the same time.

Having listened to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East today, and on the principle that it is garbage in, garbage out, it seems to me that the cooking, the nappies and the economic policy somehow were confused during the course of the hon. Gentleman's speech. His speech today was characterised by a refusal to answer questions and by a reversion to platitudes. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that it is not fair and it is not honest with the people of this country to try to fool them about serious matters such as unemployment and economic recovery.

The new leader of the Labour party would be proud of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. His speech today was vacuous and fatuous. It was airy-headed, it was full of guff, and it was full of blah. Labour Members are about to elect a leader of the Labour party whose very name is a combination of blah and of air. It was a disingenuous, deceitful and dishonest speech. It was half-thought out, half-baked and less than half true. All the way through the hon. Gentleman's speech there was the hint of a planned economy re-emerging.

The electorate know that the only way that more jobs will be created is by having stable economic conditions and low inflation. That is what we have created. The people of this country know that the only way in which more jobs will be created is the way that has been followed around the world.

Over the past 10 years, 1.5 billion people have gone from dictatorship to democracy. All around the world, people see the strong connection between political freedom and economic freedom. All countries that have recently achieved political freedom are now following a policy of flexible labour markets, low tariffs, deregulation, privatisation and competition—all the policies which are espoused by the Government. It cannot be that only in Britain and only in Europe should those policies be tossed aside. The Government will follow those policies and carry them to fruition.

The leadership contest in the Labour party has been characterised by sound bites and hooey, signifying nothing. The Labour party contest has been a no-score game which has had to be settled on penalties. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) have had to pay the penalty. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East once admitted that the social chapter would destroy jobs. He has paid the penalty for having sometimes been right, and the right hon. Member for Derby, South has paid the penalty for having sometimes been left.

As always, when games are settled by penalties, people are left feeling that they have been cheated, and the people who have been cheated in this instance are the British public. The British public want to hear from the Labour party a serious exposition of an alternative economic policy. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members have had all afternoon to do that, but they have put forward not one

[Mr. Portillo]

serious idea. *[Interruption.]* I tell Labour Members frankly that they will not be able to go from now until the general election without answering the serious questions that arise. *[Interruption.]*

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Portillo: Labour Members will not be able to reply to every question by referring to—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have a point of order.

Sir Cranley Onslow: You must be aware, Madam Speaker, that it has become extremely difficult for right hon. and hon. Members to hear the debate because of the noise that is coming from the Opposition. Will you persuade the House to be quieter?

Madam Speaker: I have speakers beside me, so the debate is very clear for me, but I wish that the House would come to order so that we might hear the final two minutes of the winding-up speech.

Mr. Portillo: It will not be sufficient for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to reply to every question between now and the general election by referring to what people said in their election addresses. One cannot smile one's way to an economic policy, one cannot grin one's way to competitiveness, and one cannot build a stronger economy out of platitudes. No—one needs principles, convictions, policies, determination and courage. The Labour party has none of those. We demonstrate every day that we have those qualities, and that is why the British people will place their confidence in us.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 261, Noes 302.

Division No. 297] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard

Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Amendment accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House welcomes the publication of the Government's latest economic forecast, which shows growth continuing at a steady and sustainable rate and inflation remaining within its target range; and congratulates the Government on its economic policies which have laid the foundations for the non-inflationary growth, rising industrial production and falling unemployment that is now being seen.

It being after Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question which she was directed to put at that hour, pursuant to Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.).*

ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1994-95

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £116,027,407,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1995, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 276, 277, 278 and 447.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolution by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain funds out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending on 31 March 1995; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 150.]

Railway Pensions

10.17 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That the draft Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th July, be approved.

The House will recall that, when we debated the Railway Pensions (Protection and Designation of Schemes) Order 1994 and the Railways Pension Scheme Order 1994—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members who are having conversations must do so outside the Chamber. They must move on quickly. *[Interruption.]* The doors must be closed, and hon. Members must move out quietly.

Mr. Freeman: The House will recall that, when we debated the Railway Pensions (Protection and Designation of Schemes) Order 1994 and the Railways Pension Scheme Order 1994 on 23 May, I indicated that a further affirmative order would be required to transfer the pension rights and assets in the BR pension scheme to the railways pension scheme and to allocate them between the sections of the RPS.

We have long agreed with the trustees that when the time came to transfer funds from the British Rail pension scheme into new schemes, that would have to be done on an agreed actuarial basis and that, unless the BRPS was in deficit, the accrued rights of all active and pensioner members should be adequately funded. Since that was agreed, we have built on the policy considerably and now have the one railways pension scheme and its sections. The original policy on transfer of funds is safeguarded in the order. The order also has the effect of allocating between the sections any initial surplus that there may be in the scheme—and it is likely that there will be an initial surplus.

As I have said, we have long agreed the broad principles of this order, but, in past month or so, we have had intensive discussions with the trustees. The trustees' officers kept the trustee board members closely informed about that process. We went out formally to consultation on this with the trustees, the employers and the trade unions on 29 June, and laid the order before Parliament on 7 July.

The result of all those consultations was that the Government's proposals were changed in some points of detail as we explored the issues with the trustees and others. The provisions of schedule 11 to the Railways Act 1993 required us to consult the trustees on the provisions in the order relating to the transfer of pension rights and the pension scheme assets, and also the amendment of existing schemes, and further to lay before Parliament copies of the trustees' written comments. I am pleased to tell the House that we reached full agreement with the trustees, and that they do not wish to make any comments. I have placed in the Library a copy of their letter of 6 July confirming that.

The trustees have a fiduciary duty to all members of the scheme, both participating members and pensioners, and also, of course, to the participating employers. Both we and the trustees consider the transfer provisions equitable in the interests of all concerned.

Article 2 of the order has the effect of transferring the existing members of the main BR pension scheme, the BRPS, together with the assets and pension liabilities, into

the railways pension scheme, the RPS, on 1 October—with the BRPS then being wound up. Provision is made for the assets and pension rights to be allocated as appropriate to one or other of the pensioner sections or, in respect of serving staff, into the BR open section. In due course, participants may be moved, under the provisions of the scheme, out of the open section into the new sections of other employers as they are established.

Schedule 1 makes detailed provision for the allocation of assets between sections on a basis which, as I said earlier, we and the trustees consider to be fair both to serving staff—the participants—and to pensioners, existing or deferred. Once assets related to additional voluntary contributions, which are separately invested, and any contributions paid by an employer during the period of the current contribution holiday have been allocated to the appropriate section, the remaining assets will be apportioned between the sections on a "share of fund" basis—that is, in proportion to the respective pension liabilities.

For that purpose, the existing reserves for contribution holidays or reductions will count as pension liabilities of the open section, and the open section liabilities will also take account of any pensionable pay increases agreed on or before 30 September 1994 for implementation before 1 January 1995. The liabilities of the pensioners' sections will include an allowance for future administrative expenses because those expenses in respect of the pensioners' sections can no longer be met out of future contributions. The proportions of any pension rights funded under the Transport Act 1980 are excluded from the calculation of liabilities because Government support payments will be made direct to the relevant section.

Provision is made for the assets to be allocated net of apportionment costs, but those costs are likely to be minimal as BR will reimburse the actuary's costs in carrying out the valuation—the only substantial cost of making the apportionment.

The Government's and the scheme's actuaries have agreed the detailed actuarial assumptions set out in part III of the schedule. We have made provision for the trustees to make an initial allocation of assets, but have specified in the order certain minimum proportionate holdings of certain categories of assets in the final allocation of assets to the pensioners A section, again with the trustees' agreement. That ensures that the investment policy of that section has an appropriate degree of caution from the outset.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Minister will be aware that railway pensioners have been exceedingly upset by the suggestion that, as part of its current campaign, Railtrack might withhold some of the assets liable to be handed over to the funds. Will he assure us that under no circumstances will Railtrack be in a position to withhold any part of the pension funds or assets due to railwaymen and women and which they have paid for many times over?

Mr. Freeman: I give that assurance. It may help the hon. Lady if I explain the position. There is a substantial pay restructuring reserve of approximately £600 million currently within the pension fund. If an agreement is reached in the present dispute with the signalmen, for example, on new pensionable pay rates before 30 September this year, it will be possible, on the vesting of the new pension scheme, to allocate a suitable proportion of the total pay restructuring reserve direct to the account of individual signalmen who contribute to the pension fund.

I assure the hon. Lady that Railtrack has no power to withhold the allocation of those funds. If no agreement is reached on improved pensionable pay for the signalmen, the pay restructuring reserve moneys go to the account of the open section of the fund. All that happens is that the signalmen and women who contribute to the British Rail pension fund will not have the specific allocation of funds that would otherwise be their right as at 1 October. The rest of the restructuring reserve will fall into a generality of funds allocated to the open section of the fund, but the money remains within the pension fund.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): It would be helpful if the Minister could clarify this matter now to save time later. We are discussing a sum of about £100 million. Am I right in thinking that, if that money does not go to the signalmen because the dispute has not been resolved, when the Minister says that it goes to the "generality" of the fund, he means that it would be divided on a 53:47 per cent. basis like the rest of the surplus in the fund?

Mr. Freeman: The initial surplus as at 1 October, which includes a large measure of the pay restructuring reserve released for allocation to the closed and open sections of the fund, may result in £200 million or £300 million being allocated to the closed fund and a fraction more to the open fund. Those proportions have been fixed by the actuaries, not by the Government or Railtrack. I confirm that the part of the surplus allocated to the open section of the fund must, in due course, be allocated to the various employers in the rail industry, such as Railtrack, the British Railways Board and the franchised train operations. So that surplus will be allocated to specific sections of the pension fund.

If the strike is not resolved and no agreement is reached on higher pensionable pay for signalmen, they must join other members who contribute to the BR pension fund in claiming their right to that surplus in due course, possibly in terms of higher pension payments. There is no question of the money being removed or of Railtrack controlling its use.

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): Is there a chance of the date of 30 September being changed so that an extra factor does not enter the signalmen's dispute and the threat of losing money from their pensions is not held over their heads as blackmail?

Mr. Freeman: It is not a question of blackmail. There has long been agreement with the trustees that 1 October was the target date for vesting. I remember an exchange with the hon. Gentleman in Committee on this very subject. The present dispute has arisen since the target date was fixed. I pay tribute to the trustees and their officers, who have been working with the Department to that target date, which is entirely achievable and realistic. It is in the interests of all existing and deferred pensioners within the railway industry that those outstanding difficulties should be resolved.

We have worked extremely hard in the past six months to fulfil our pledge on a guarantee of the pensions in the closed section of the fund, both for the existing and deferred pensioners, and the indefeasible right of all those

[Mr. Freeman]

who were employed by British Rail on 5 November 1993 to remain in the pension scheme. We have agreed that, on voluntary transfer, there will be a continuous period of employment for purposes of calculating pensions. We have fulfilled all the obligations that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have given, and we have ended up with a situation with which I think all parties—but represented by the trustees—now agree. To move the date, or even to hold open the prospect of moving the date, would be in the interests of no one.

Mr. Heppell: Is it not a fact that the money that the Minister is talking about removing from the signalmen's pensions will effectively be used to cushion the Government's past guarantees in relation to solvency? The 47 per cent. that was intended for signalmen and drivers under the restructuring schemes will be going into the closed fund. Now it is in the closed fund, and effectively making it more difficult for the Government ever to have to honour that solvency guarantee, because they will have a cushion of approaching £300 million.

Mr. Freeman: I think, with respect, there is a confusion between two points.

Railtrack suggests reforms to the structure of the pay of signalmen and women, consolidating into basic rates of pay allowances that are in general not pensionable. If that happens before the vesting date, there will be an allocation of part of the pay restructuring reserve specifically for the benefit of the signalmen and women.

The rest of the pay restructuring reserve—the rest of the surplus that is agreed by the actuaries—will be allocated between the open and closed sections of the funds, not by Government diktat but by agreement between the two scheme actuaries. There is likely to be a significant surplus for allocation, and that is to the benefit of the pensioners as much as it is of those in the open fund, because they have that much greater a degree of security. That has arisen through good investment management of the fund, not by Government policy.

Schedule 2 makes detailed provision for the allocation of pension rights between the appropriate sections, and for the members with those pension rights to be allocated to the relevant sections.

Article 3 makes drafting amendments to clarify the meaning of the Railway Pensions (Protection and Designation of Schemes) Order 1994, which came into force on 31 May following the undertakings that I gave to the House to reconsider some of the drafting. We have honoured the undertaking that I gave. The amendments, however, do not change the substance of those earlier orders.

Article 4 introduces schedule 3, which amends the trust deed of the BR 1974 pension fund to enable BR staff who are transferred to new employers to remain in certain schemes that are included in that fund, and to enable those schemes to be wound up when appropriate.

Schedule 3 also makes a standard amendment to certain schemes other than the BRPS, for which the trustee company acts at present. That amendment would give the trustee company, and its directors and officers, an indemnity from the participating employers in those schemes against liability for honest mistakes but not wrongdoing, and a power to take out indemnity insurance similar to the provisions contained in clauses 2E and 2F of the RPS trust. It will formalise the existing indemnity in respect of those schemes which the trustee has from BR.

Article 5 introduces schedule 4, which amends the schedule to the Railways Pension Scheme Order 1994, containing the trust and rules of the RPS. One amendment extends the limit of liability and indemnity in the RPS trust to any liability for breaches of trust transferred from the old trustee to the new. Another provides for the trustee of the RPS to amend the scheme before 1 October 1994, with the consent of the Secretary of State. It is the intention to use that provision to make amendments agreed to between us —inter alia, to clause 8C, which deals with transfers out of the trust, and to rules 13, dealing with surplus assets, 14, dealing with shortfall, and 16, dealing with winding up of the pensioners sections. The trustees' solicitor is currently preparing a deed of amendment for execution once that order has been approved.

The other amendments effected by schedule 4 include clarification as to eligibility to join the scheme and sections of it, and amendments to the model deed of establishment and participation to clarify the continuation for participants in open sections of the RPS of the present BRPS contribution reductions/holiday.

Article 6 introduces schedule 5, which designates sections of the scheme for the purpose of enabling or requiring the payment of Government support contributions under the Transport Act 1980. Article 7 introduces schedule 6, which makes consequential amendments or modifications to existing legislation.

Although we have still to lay a substitution order under section 52B of the 1980 Act varying the timing of Government support payments to the pensioners' sections on the basis already agreed with the trustees, the provisions to be implemented under the order complete the delivery of the undertakings given by the Government. They provide the promised security, protection and peace of mind to BR's existing staff, pensioners and deferred pensioners. They provide no mechanism for the Government to get hold of the funds, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made clear right from the outset. I hope that the House will support the order.

10.35 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On one level, the order is non-controversial; on another, it is deeply controversial and raises fundamental issues. It also relates directly to some topical matters that I hope we can explore during the debate, and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has rightly referred.

It is important to put on record the fact that, every time we debate the future of the railway industry pension fund, there is no consensus in the House, no cosy agreement, no technical agreement that everything is fine and that we are progressing on a bipartisan basis towards satisfactory conclusions. It is the Opposition's view that the railway industry pension fund should never have been interfered with and should not be broken up, and the fact that it is being broken up is entirely a by-product of the unwanted fragmentation of the railways with a view to their privatisation.

We do not believe that there is any public support for those policies. We do not believe that there is any political support for them outside the narrow clique promoting them

within the Conservative party. The reprehensible aspect is that a great deal of concern has been caused to railway pensioners throughout the country, not specifically by the order but by the fact that their pension fund has been tampered with by a Government who have been acting not in the best interests—or indeed, any interests—of those pensioners, but who instead have been driven by the political imperative of fragmentation and privatisation of the railways.

That is the context in which we debate the order. While there will be agreement on the narrow basis of the order and although we may not divide the House—depending on what we hear later—there will be no agreement on the wider framework. Even now, when we believe that we have beaten back the worst intentions of the Tories towards the pension fund, there are still many, many railway pensioners who remember their original intentions only too well. They remember the intention to split the fund in two and transfer half of it to the Treasury, to be set against the public sector borrowing requirement. They remember the intention that there be no increases in benefits to pensioners other than the rate of the retail prices index. We and the railway pensioners remember all that, which is why they are right not to trust the Tories or to take anything that they say at face value.

I have been told, as the Minister has, that the pension fund trustees have no specific objections to the order. I am satisfied that, on purely actuarial grounds it is non-controversial. However, I stress that the context within which it arises is, and will remain, controversial and, in our view, downright wrong.

There is a direct relationship between what we are discussing tonight and the signalmen's dispute, as I shall show later in my speech. One thing that I want to get out of the way and firmly on the record is that if anyone says that previous settlements for railway workers have not taken account of past productivity gains—gains that have already been delivered—that is quite simply an untruth. That means that the Government's position, and therefore Railtrack's position, in the present dispute is based on the same—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but that is strictly out of order, because it does not relate to the order that is the subject of the debate.

Mr. Wilson: With all respect, I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it relates very directly to the order, as I will show if I am allowed to develop the argument a little. It relates closely for the reasons already alluded to by my hon. Friends the Members for Crewe and Nantwich and for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell), and, indeed, which were acknowledged by the Minister when responding to their interventions. If you will allow me that degree of latitude, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will show you directly how it relates to the order tonight, without any—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I will certainly give the hon. Gentleman a short opportunity to do so, but I have to be convinced.

Mr. Wilson: Among other things, it is my job to convince you, Madam Deputy Speaker. But I place it within that context. There is no question of it not being related to the order.

I shall now quote from a document that was produced by the railway staffs arbitration tribunal, in settlement of the previous national dispute on the railways, on 7 July 1989. The chairman and other members placed on record that

> "The railway industry has been marked, in the last two years particularly, by very significant improvements in productivity as clearly demonstrated by data in the BRB latest annual report and accounts. Indeed, these productivity improvements have been of such an order that there has been no contribution to cost inflation from the wage bill of the rail industry in the last financial year.
>
> In our view, the exceptional productivity performance of this industry and its workers, and the co-operation displayed by the group involved in this reference towards restructuring, should properly be reflected in some real improvement in basic rates of pay."

In other words, the previous rail dispute was settled specifically by taking account of past productivity gained within the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has now been given the opportunity to demonstrate the connection between what he has been saying and the order. I have to say that he has not demonstrated that connection to me. I am sorry, but he must not continue along those lines.

Mr. Wilson: You are being uncharacteristically ungenerous, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the amount of time allowed to develop an argument. Perhaps I can help you in reaching your decision by referring to the headline in *The Independent* today, which states:

> "Railtrack strikers threatened with £50m pension loss".

That is why the two things are related. They are threatened with a £50 million pension loss precisely because of the relationship that I have mentioned.

Initially, the settlement of the dispute was related to the order not by me but by Ministers and Railtrack seeking to tie up the future of the pension fund with the outcome of the signal workers' dispute. I would be delighted to say that there is no relationship between them, but as long as such threats appear, clearly on the basis of a Government briefing, that relationship exists and cannot be said not to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. But we are not debating newspaper reports. We are debating the order, and I see no connection.

Mr. Wilson: I shall try to make headway and take account of what you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have said—

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): This is irrelevant.

Mr. Wilson: If the hon. Gentleman wanders in late at night and makes sedentary interventions, which, frankly, I think that he would be embarrassed about if he read them the next day in *Hansard*, that is his concern, but we will try to make serious arguments about serious subjects, which include the future of railway workers' pensions and which seems to me to be rather important.

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would never dream of questioning any ruling from the Chair, as you know. We are in some difficulty. I understand that you will not want to discuss newspaper reports in general, but the difficulty that those of us who represent railwaymen are in is that the two things are directly linked, and they are of great concern to the people who work in the railway industry and feel that the remarks of Railtrack are directly linked to the order.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you also bear it in mind, before you stop my hon. Friend from proceeding along this particular track—if I can use that unfortunate phrase—that other groups of railway workers who were rewarded for productivity deals before the dispute had their pension payments based on those productivity deals, under the terms of the order? The anxiety that my hon. Friend expresses is that the delay in concluding the deal will directly affect the pensions of railway signal workers. Surely that is relevant to the order. It is the reason why most of us are here.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not clear, as my hon. Friend the Minister spelt out, that the date in the order is the end of September or beginning of October and the earnings of signal staff are relevant? However, for those of us who represent travellers on the railways as well as for some people who work on the railways, to go into the full ins and outs of the dispute would, as you have said, be out of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have heard the various points made. I fully understand that there are concerns about the current dispute. There are other ways to raise those concerns. Tonight we must deal with the specific order before us.

Mr. Wilson: I have no difficulty with that ruling. I recognise the distinction that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) has made, but it cannot be said that there is no relationship. I have put on record a quotation which I am sure will be hung round the neck of Ministers in other ways. It disproves the idea that settlements of railway disputes have never been based on recognition of past productivity.

I shall now narrow the relationship between the order and the dispute. We have here the threat, ill-defined though it may be, that £50 million will be lost for ever to the railway employees pension fund. More specifically, the threat is that each striking signal worker will personally lose £1,700 in later life as a result of the dispute. That gives a whole new dimension to the order, which is certainly not irrelevant.

The threat arises out of the restructuring of railway workers' grades. The result of regrading employees and increasing their basic salaries is that the pension fund has to pay out more than expected because pension entitlements are based on the final salaries of fund members. I am pleased to see the Minister nod. In order to meet that reality, a substantial kitty was created out of the pension fund surplus. Indeed, the Minister obliged by giving it a more formal name. He called it the pay restructuring reserve.

Various groups of workers who successively have had their terms and conditions restructured have already benefited out of the pay restructuring reserve. The signal and telecom engineers, the permanent way staff—that is the track workers, for the ill-informed who have joined us—the traffic grades—that is the station staff—have all had their terms and conditions restructured. All have received increases in their basic rates of pay. In each case, the employer drew on the fund to meet the extra payments to pensioners as they drew their increased entitlement. In each and every case, past productivity was incorporated into the restructuring of the employees' pay and grades.

That leaves just two categories to be settled in the same way—the drivers, who are not immediately germane to tonight's discussion or the current controversy—and most significantly for the purposes of our discussions tonight and for the travelling public, the signalmen.

I have no doubt that the signalmen's dispute would not have happened and that their pay and conditions would have been restructured in the same way as the signal and telecom engineers, the permanent way staff and the traffic grades if we had not had the lunatic transfer of the role of negotiator from the British Railways Board to Railtrack.

So the signalmen are the people we have in our minds tonight. They have a direct relationship to the order. I understand, and I think that the Minister confirmed, that £600 million is left in that fund. Rather less than one fifth of that amount attaches to signalmen—a little more than £100 million. The threat is that, if agreement is not reached by 30 September, that pay restructuring reserve will effectively close.

The order would break down the fund on a 53:47 basis. Signalmen who are current employees would lose the 47 per cent., which would go to the fund for pensioners. In the words of *The Independent* and of a Department of Transport and Railtrack briefing, £50 million could be gone for ever. Others may offer advice to the contrary, but that is the relevance of my argument to the debate.

If one divides £50 million by the number of signalmen, it works out at about £1,700 per head. That is the basis of the threat that has been widely reported today in the briefing of the Department of Transport and Railtrack. It states that signalmen are to lose £1,700 in pension entitlements.

Two questions arise directly from that. The first is: is it appropriate for Ministers to associate themselves with such a threat? Will it help to solve the dispute if one threatens people—who in many cases have given their lives to the railway industry and have been employed on low pay—not only with what Ministers or Railtrack will do to them in their attempts to confront and defeat them in the dispute, but with the knowledge that, after they have left the employment of Railtrack, £1,700 will be taken from them? Does that improve the atmosphere of the dispute? I hope that the Minister will agree that it will not, any more than the Government's initial interference in the dispute assisted its settlement.

The second question is also worth asking to place on record one of the possible answers. What do the Government get out of it? Again, my colleagues have been right in the points that they have made. The Government have a vested interest in not achieving a settlement. If a settlement is not reached with signalmen by 30 September, £50 million will revert to the fund for railway pensioners. If a settlement is not reached with drivers, about £280 million will revert to that closed fund. The Government's interest lies in the fact that there would be a £280 million hedge against the solvency guarantee on the pensioners fund, which they so bitterly resisted in the first place.

I am not a conspiracy theorist, so I do not say that the Government are driving the dispute and preventing a settlement because they want £280 million. *[Interruption.]* The master of sedentary interventions, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) must have something tremendously important to say. If he wishes to rise to his feet, he would be welcome to say it, but I suspect that he is limited to monosyllables.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I take it from the hon. Gentleman's comments that he would like the dispute to end sooner rather than later. If that is so, will he advise his brethren in the RMT union to return to the negotiating table to try to find a solution?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members of my previous strictures. Comments must be narrowly connected to the order.

Mr. Wilson: I hope that I have proven conclusively, Madam Deputy Speaker, that everything that I said was directly related—

Dr. Hampson: Nonsense.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the speech of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I do so to say that I deplore seated interventions, from whichever side they come. I frequently say so in the House. I do not want to hear any more from the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not need protection, but the House does, against such foolishness.

On the question of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), of course I want negotiations. I want people to return to the negotiating table tomorrow and I want the minimum of political interference in the dispute. With no political interference, the dispute would not have reached industrial action and it could have been resolved easily. That is why I asked earlier today whether the Government would block the restoration of the 5.7 per cent. offer, which would have been the basis of a settlement if only Ministers had not forced it to be taken off the table.

I do not want to stray wider than the order and so far I have resisted doing so, but I hope that the few hon. Members who have an interest in the matter will recognise that there is something in the order, in the delay, that is of potential benefit to the Government and to the Treasury. The Government may plant stories about a £1,700 threat to individual signal workers and about £50 million being taken out of the pension fund and not put back, but it is a double-edged sword because anyone who knows anything about the matter will be able to examine the circumstances and find out that there is a vested interest concealed in that story—the vested interest of government not to allow the issue to be settled. Other vested interests working in government do not want the dispute to be settled, but they are not germane to tonight's debate.

I do not know what reshuffling is going on, but if the present Secretary of State gets the heave later this week the nation, with one voice, will say "godspeed and good riddance" because all that he has brought to the industry has been fragmentation and chaos and a lowering of morale and investment to the point where the only country in Europe that invests less in its rail network is Finland. A boardroom in Helsinki may want him, but nobody in our public transport industry does.

Let us have none of the double talk. There is no agreement that we should be here tonight, because in the first place we should not be breaking up our railway industry, and if we were not doing so we would not be breaking up the pension fund. If we were not breaking up the pension fund, we would not have caused anguish and despair in the past 18 months to tens of thousands of railway pensioners. The Labour party, rail pensioners, trade unions and public opinion have forced the Government to back off from their original intentions in respect of the railway pension funds, and for that much we are thankful, but there is no consensus on the primary aims and certainly no consensus on the fact that, once again, the Government seem to be using pensions as a threat to win a dispute.

Instead of doing that, the Government should be settling the dispute, which means people getting around a table, talking about a normal industrial dispute through normal industrial channels and recognising that it involves a retrospective claim that has been recognised as legitimate for every other section of the railway industry.

10.57 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): That was a pretty pathetic speech. In effect, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) was saying was that if the dispute were settled before the end of September, twice as much of the signalmen's pay—£100 million instead of £50 million—would become eligible for pensions.

I strongly object to any party spokesman being sponsored by one of the producer interests. We should be speaking of the fair division of the pension fund now that the railway industry is being divided, but when talking about the interests of the producers—signal staff and others who work in the industry—we should think first of those whom they serve: the travelling public.

My constituents want the order to give the full £100 million benefit to signalling staff because they want to see consolidation of people's earnings for sick pay, for mortgages and for pensions. When the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North spoke of the eligibility for pensions at low pay—pensions are obviously linked to pay—he should have said that the rate of increase of signalling staff's pay eligible for pension purposes now, and twice as much if they agree a modern pay deal, had risen significantly faster than the pay for manual workers.

One of the reasons for that is that signalling staff are on the bridge between being manual workers and modern industrial workers in a modern railway industry. Part of the agreement should have been to move them on to full, effective salary status, rather than the hotch-potch of allowances, overtime rates and shift and roster payments.

For seven years, the RMT, which sponsors 12 hon. Members, has failed, with management, to get a pension deal that doubles up the eligibility for pension.

You were absolutely right, Madam Deputy Speaker, to point out that if we confine our remarks to the pay that is eligible for pensions, and to that date at the end of September when the £50 million would return to the closed part of the fund rather than be eligible, open and available to those who are still working in Railtrack, and also for others working in the railway industry, we will stay in order.

I want everyone working in the railway industry to have modern terms and conditions of employment. That means that pension arrangements should take their full earnings into account. If people argue that the present dispute, which is tangential to this debate, is justified because of the amounts of money involved, I ask them to consider that a top grade member of the signalling staff would be able to have earnings of well over £20,000 a year eligible for pension entitlement.

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

If the dispute were settled, the average earnings eligible for pension entitlement would be £17,000 a year. Many of the people who travel on the railways, especially those who travel from stations in my constituency, who earn less than £17,000 a year—and certainly less than the £24,000 that top signalling staff receive—believe that the signalling staff should be doing what other people on lower pay have done, and that is ensuring that all their earnings are eligible for pension entitlement so that that entitlement is not made up of a basic pay which is half their average earnings.

When I first entered the industrial relations and personnel field and was working in industrial relations for the British Steel Corporation in the late 1960s, we tried, with the representatives of the people at work, to provide people with what was, in effect, common status.

Hon. Members who are sponsored in this House, apparently sponsored to be silent rather than to speak up, should have told the RMT that they wanted modern conditions and pension arrangements which do not involve leaks to the newspapers about the £50 million that may go missing, as that has been obvious for the past seven years of negotiation.

If the signalling staff are not aware of that, and of the effect of the order, what on earth have their representatives in the RMT being doing and saying to them for the past seven years, let alone for the past seven weeks of this dispute? *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) interrupts from a sedentary position. He is one of those people who should give up his "money for votes" sponsorship by the RMT so that he can feel as free to speak on behalf of the travelling public as spokesmen of other parties are to speak on behalf of those who are supposed to receive the benefit of services in transport or other areas.

Mr. Snape: Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me, as a sponsored Member of the RMT, and as a former railwayman and railway signalman, that the RMT and its sponsorship does not influence my voice or my vote in this place? What the hon. Gentleman is saying is absolutely despicable and totally wrong. Seven years ago, there was no intention of progressing down this particularly barmy path of fragmenting the railway industry. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to participate in these debates late at night, he should do the House the service of reading something about the subject under discussion and read something about the order.

Mr. Bottomley: Other hon. Members will be aware that the order is about the division of the pension fund. It is a consequence of earlier legislation. I would be surprised if the hon. Gentleman had missed his chance of contributing to those debates; I thought that he had contributed to them.

If the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) argues that union sponsorship has different effects from those that I have outlined, I would put it to him that a sensible union would want to have agreed a deal for its members whereby all their earnings were eligible for pensions seven years ago.

Would the hon. Gentleman disagree with that? It would be very surprising if he did.

Mr. Snape: I do not want to drag this out. However, I urge the hon. Gentleman to understand that the matter of salaried status for railway signal workers and others has been the subject of long and contentious discussions. Of course the RMT would like its signalling staff to be placed on the salaried grades and thereby make their wages and salaries liable to the pension payments under the terms of the order. Understandably, the RMT also sought a lump sum payment for the productivity concessions that had already been made. That is partly what the dispute is about.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I caution the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) to keep narrowly to the terms of the order, rather than debate the history of the railways and any disputes therein.

Mr. Bottomley: Even leaving aside the past seven years, we seem to have established agreement that getting on to full pensionable earnings makes sense.

During the past seven weeks, when we have been moving toward this draft order coming before the House and when hon. Members have been speaking outside about the rights and wrongs of the dispute, we have had to face two facts. First, the RMT has failed to deliver fully for any of its members modern terms and conditions of employment. That is a tragedy.

Those who consider the past know that one of the reasons why the order, although not contentious in itself, is brought forward in a contentious atmosphere is that the RMT has had a different industrial relations history from that of many others. One has only to read the books to understand that point.

Secondly, the RMT sponsors 12 Members of Parliament, but, to my knowledge, it has not sent a full briefing to the other 630-odd Members of Parliament. In general, its sponsored Members have been almost silent and their communication with the rest of us on this and associated issues has been very slender.

If the union wants to say that it is important for its members to be able to get the pay restructuring reserve in the order, it should ask all hon. Members, "Will you say to the signallers and to other railway staff in your constituency that it is important that the RMT reaches a deal with the employer, so that we do not go past the end of September with the issue unresolved?" I am not talking about the strike, I am talking about how people are paid and—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am concerned that the hon. Gentleman now seems to be debating who should have said what and to whom. That is not relevant. The hon. Gentleman must deploy his own arguments and allow others to deploy theirs.

Mr. Bottomley: One of the reasons why I shall not get very far in politics and for my not hanging on to my telephone for the next two or three days is that I am not always very good at communicating. Under the heading "Citation and commencement", article 1(b) refers to

"articles 2(1) to (10), 6 and 7 on 1st October 1994"

and is directly linked to my sentence before you gave me guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker.

All of us should be saying to all signalling staff in our constituencies for their benefit and, for that matter, for the benefit of the travelling public that a deal should be done before the end of September so that the provisions in the statutory instrument are to the benefit of those still working in the railway industry and not just for existing pensioners, which is where the money would go otherwise.

I hope that, by the end of September, the provisions in the order will be available in full measure to those working

in the industry, but I give this warning: if there is a failure by those who are sponsored by the union to help put pressure on the union to reach a deal, the people who will lose are those whose union subscriptions have been paying part of the election expenses of the silent 12, including a potential Labour leader, the Opposition's trade and industry spokesman, their transport spokesman, their employment spokesman and their social security spokesman.

11.7 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is not my intention to detain the House very long, but this is a very important subject and I hope that it will be seriously considered, at least for the rest of this short debate.

I do not believe that the Minister is unaware of how tremendously worried railwaymen and railwaywomen are about their pensions. This and other orders are the culmination of much negotiation, frankly great misunderstanding, and certainly great unease. I am a sponsored Member of the RMT, and many railwaymen and railwaywomen in my constituency regularly talk to me about their pension entitlements. They have been exceedingly disturbed by the negotiations, first, because they saw no need for them; secondly, because they were extremely concerned by the Government's attitude to the closed funds; and, thirdly, because they believed and still believe that there is considerable doubt about the veracity of the Government's arguments.

I am afraid that, in a miasma of total disbelief, people who have given their lives to the railway industry will find it very difficult to accept that they should accept what the Minister is proposing. They are deeply worried; they are not at all happy about the fact that what should be a straightforward organisation of their pensions for the future has suddenly become a political football. It upsets them very much that, at every stage of the negotiations on the pension funds that we are discussing, the Government appeared to have been forced into giving way until some kind of agreement was reached with the trustees.

I hope that a solution will be found to the current dispute. I believe that passengers' safety should be paramount, that the House should strive to retain the reliability and good will of railway operators and, above all, that no one inside or outside the industry should be in any doubt that the pension funds of a basic industry are being administered for the good of those who have contributed to them. If those people believe that the Government or their puppet Railtrack may be seeking to use their pension funds as a political football, they will not only feel real dismay and fear; they will feel that they have been betrayed by the House of Commons. I not only understand that attitude, but see it in my day-to-day dealing with railwaymen and women.

I must tell the Minister that there is a long way to go in rebuilding trust between the Government and transport operators. I hope that tonight's debate will not make the gap even wider.

11.11 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): Let me begin, as I always do in debates about pensions, by declaring that I am a British Rail pensioner—a deferred pensioner. I have been told on previous occasions that my interest is not significant enough to prevent me from speaking, but it is fairly significant to me, which is why I am speaking.

I was amazed by what was said by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). I shall do my best not to refer to it much, but part of the reason for my being a deferred pensioner is the fact that I was made redundant. If the hon. Gentleman's speech and—I think—the mood of the country are anything to go by, in the near future the hon. Gentleman may begin to know what redundancy feels like.

The order affects my income, and that of ordinary pensioners. I do not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that this is just a product of the fragmentation of British Rail; I think that it is much worse than that. From the beginning, I had no doubt that the Government intended not just to privatise the railways but to get their hands on my pension fund. Their actions showed that. Only my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North, other Labour Members and pensioners themselves, who rose up in anger at the proposals, stopped the Government taking control of the pension funds.

The Minister was right: the Government did not actually take anything out of the pension funds. What they did was stop putting something in. The payments that they used to make have now ceased and will not be made again. I believe that undertakings have been made to resume them if they are needed, but, effectively, they have ceased.

I lost out. It is no use the Minister's saying that the trustees agreed to the move; they did not. They accepted it because it was the best deal that they could get from Government, but they did not want it or volunteer for it.

The trustees have a narrow role. They have a fiduciary duty and that is why they have had to accept—not agree to—the Government's tabling this order. I am not prepared to accept it, because I recognise that the pension that I had previously was better than the pension deal that I will get now. I am prepared, however, to accept that nothing that I say or do will change the Government's mind and that the deal will not get any better.

I take exception to one thing, to which other hon. Members have also referred. In fighting to protect my pension fund, one of the guarantees that we got—it had to be fought for—from the Government was a solvency guarantee. If the fund looked as if it were in difficulties, the Government would guarantee its solvency. What do I find now?

The Government stepped in as the unions and Railtrack were about to reach a 5.7 per cent. settlement and effectively snookered the deal. It was finished and I thought that it was merely political vindictiveness. I thought that Government were union-bashing again, and wanted to blame the difficulties on all the left-wingers in the unions. I have sat with many signalmen and there are not many left-wingers among them, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will confirm, as en ex-signalman. Their political viewpoint is conservative—with a small "c"—and they have common-sense views. If they vote for a strike, it means that there is something radically wrong.

It really annoyed me when I found out that it was not merely dogma that had made the Government interfere in the pay settlement, that there was another reason. Once again, the Government were trying to get some money out of the fund. As before, they were not intending to take something out, but to stop themselves from having to put

[Mr. John Heppell]

something in. If, on 30 September, the fund is distributed, 47 per cent. will go to the closed fund and, effectively, will act as a cushion, which will mean that the Government will not have to pay the solvency guarantee if it is required. The money will have been stolen from the signalmen—possibly from the drivers as well.

I feel annoyed that the Government are using the pension funds to blackmail signalmen and, by doing so, are souring industrial relations and the chances of Railtrack's arriving at a settlement. The Government are using the money not merely for blackmail, but to hold the travelling public to ransom. Without Government interference in the strike, the dispute would have been settled by now and the travelling public would not have been inconvenienced in the way—

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I have been present since the beginning of the debate and this is the second time that it has been suggested that it is somehow to the Government's advantage to spin the dispute out until the end of September. Has the hon. Gentleman no idea of the cost to the country, the Government, the travelling public, the businesses of this country and the prosperity of the nation caused by the dispute? The suggestion that the Government should be trying to spin it out for the benefit of some putative robbery of the pension fund seems bizarre.

Mr. Heppell: I should like to think that the hon. Gentleman is right. There is an easy solution—for the Government to tell Railtrack that it can do as it wants and decide on whatever settlement it wants. The answer would be simple, and Railtrack would already have settled because it was in the process of doing so when the Government interfered.

I recognise that what I say tonight will not make any difference to the Minister or to Tory Members. I want to make it clear, and put it on the record, that there is no consensus about what the Government are doing to railwaymen's pensions and my pension. My pension will be worse as a result of what the Government are doing. It is all right for the Minister to shake his head; he will not feel the difficulties in his wallet. I will feel the difficulties.

I am in a privileged position because I do not have to rely on only my railway pension. I will have the opportunity of a pension from here, which is much better than any railwayman's pension will ever be. However, many people, including many of my constituents, will be relying on that pension. I do not want to see them in the same position as the Maxwell pensioners in another 20 years.

11.20 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I speak as a Member sponsored by the rail drivers' union, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. I say to the Minister, as I have had occasion to say to him before, that the peace of mind that he deems with his sanguine carelessness to be part and parcel of the lives of employees and pensioners of the railway industry is not anything other than a hope at present for the members of ASLEF.

The Minister and Tory Members who have spoken tonight in this debate, as in previous debates, have persisted in attempting to present an image of the British Rail pension as something which the Government have restructured, and made safe and viable.

The Minister knows, as do all hon. Members in the House, that the British Rail pension scheme was one of the best managed, and certainly one of the most productive, schemes in the country. The turmoil came about when the Government decided erroneously, as Opposition Members believe, and as the majority of the British public believe, to restructure—effectively, to break up—the British Rail network in the ideological pursuit of privatisation.

It is that break-up which has caused the concern that is still being felt, certainly by the members of ASLEF, over what they perceive to be unnecessary breakages in what was an efficient and highly productive pension scheme. Nothing that the Minister has said this evening, and nothing in the statutory instrument, will bring about peace of mind for ASLEF members.

It is extraordinary that the Minister can depute or, in fact, give a name to a sizeable proportion of the pension fund. It is the pay restructuring fund, £230 million of which is earmarked for the engine drivers' pension scheme. Yet, if no agreement is reached by 1 October, that entire sizeable amount will go into the general fund and be split 53:47. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) that there is a believable case for thinking that the Government wish effectively to drag things out until 1 October because such a sizeable amount in the fund would release them from having to make their first contribution to the pension fund.

I hope that I am wrong in this instance, but experience of the way the Government have handled the restructuring of the pension scheme for the rail industry leads me to believe that I am probably right. If the Minister really wishes the peace of mind to which he constantly alludes to be a reality for employees of the rail industry and pensioners, I urge him to clarify that issue tonight.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Doug Hoyle.

11.23 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Nearly, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) is not here. He is senior to me, anyway.

I had no intention of intervening in this debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, if I had realised that you thought that I was the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, I would not have done so. I have been provoked into so doing by the deplorable speech of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who displayed all the reasons why he was fired as a Transport Minister some years ago. He displayed a total lack of any knowledge of the subject which we are discussing tonight, and he made a deplorable attack on some of us who are proud of having worked in the railway industry.

I am proud of my background and that of my father, who also worked in the railway industry.

I listened to the scoffs a few moments ago when my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) said that she was sponsored by the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. I wonder at some Government Members who are prepared to defend some of the things which takes place here and the conduct of their

hon. Friends—particularly with regard to the events of the past week—yet sneer at those of us in the Opposition who are sponsored by industrial trade unions.

Anybody who knows me—including your good self, if I may say so, Madam Deputy Speaker—knows that I am hardly likely to be told either how to speak or how to vote in the House because the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers pays a sum of money to my constituency party to see that I am elected from time to time. It has never paid me a penny, any more than ASLEF pays my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate or the RMT pays my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell). Yet we continually suffer jibes during debates such as this, that we are somehow bought and paid for. It is, of course, not true.

There are genuine fears among railway workers about the future of their pensions. Those fears have not been caused by Opposition Members, but have arisen directly from the legislation which has so fragmented the railway industry and, in so doing, has fragmented the pension funds on which those workers will depend in later life.

It is always interesting to listen to the emollient words of the Minister of State, who I hope survives the reported purge this week. It is not for me to rearrange the ornaments along the Government Front Bench, but some of us would welcome the Minister's survival, because he shows a genuine interest in and concern about the future of the railway industry and the pension funds.

I hope he will acknowledge that there are already deep-seated and genuine fears among not just the signalling grades, but all grades within the industry about the future of their pensions. The conduct of the Government and Railtrack during the current dispute has done nothing other than to exacerbate those fears.

Mr. Waterson: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify whether he thinks that the future of the rail industry will be helped or hindered by the current industrial action by the RMT?

Mr. Snape: The straight answer is that the future of the rail industry is in no way helped by the industrial action, and I wish that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends would acknowledge that fact. The 5.7 per cent. offer which was made to the signalmen and withdrawn after the intervention of the Secretary of State does not help. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked me a straight question, and I have given him a straight answer.

The future of the railway industry will not be helped by the intransigent attitude of Ministers, who reacted to the 5.7 per cent. offer by saying that it must be 2.5 per cent., and interfering as they have done to drag on the dispute.

There are various other grades within the industry which have settled and received payment for past productivity, which means that their pension entitlement is obvious, laid down and transparent under the terms of this order. That does not apply to signalling staff, and without being, I hope, unduly partisan—my sympathies are well enough known, and I shall reiterate them tonight—there are real and understandable fears among signalling staff that they are being coerced into a settlement for which many will not vote. If the dispute comes towards a conclusion, signalling staff who voted for a strike in the first place will have to vote on whether any offer is acceptable.

They are enormously concerned that pressure will be put on them under the terms of the order to go back to work and see that the dispute is concluded by 30 September, or they will lose. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate pointed out that a considerable sum of money —£250 million—is involved in the order, which would be paid in pensions to drivers. That is not an inconsiderable sum by any stretch of the imagination.

So far as signalling staff are concerned, the pension fund will be considerably affected and altered under the provisions of the order.

I hope that the Minister of State will ignore some of the more inflammatory comments made tonight, especially those from the hon. Member for Eltham. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will say something sympathetic about those who have voted for action. The action has nothing to do with the extreme left. In a poll conducted among 80 per cent. of signalmen, they voted 4:1 for industrial action. Despite the terms of the order and question about the future of their pensions, the signalmen will not vote to return to work until they are satisfied that the efforts they have made are given some recognition.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will resist the temptation to make further propaganda and will ensure that the dispute is settled honourably, so that those signalmen too may benefit under the terms of the order, just as other railway grades, who have made equal contributions to the productivity of the industry, have already benefited.

11.29 pm

Mr. Wilson: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply on behalf of the Opposition.

We have had a useful debate, not least because it has kicked around some of the current issues. The one contribution that I exempt from that description came from the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). When the dispute started, I remember taking part in a discussion with him on radio, although we were in separate studios. The following morning, I did another radio interview when a tape of the comments of the hon. Member for Eltham was played. I said that that must have been what he said the night before, but I was told, "No, no. That is what he said this morning."

That demonstrated conclusively that he was reading from exactly the same script. After six weeks, he has managed to learn it off by heart, which is progress, I suppose, in terms of the hon. Gentleman, but it is still the same rubbish and is completely unhelpful in terms of resolving anything.

Dr. Hampson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You might rightly have been irritated by some of us on the Conservative Benches, who were getting extremely irritated by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr.Wilson), who was abusing the terms of the narrow order to score points about the industrial dispute. The hon. Gentleman has now started to do just that again; he is deliberately using the debate to make points about the current dispute. He has just proved that by talking about events in past few weeks.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Member may safely leave this in my hands.

Mr.Wilson: When the hon. Member grows up, he might make a speech on the subject.

[Mr. Wilson]

We have demonstrated to your satisfaction, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to that of the Minister, who has some understanding of the matter, that there is a connection between the order and the dispute. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) was perfectly right to draw attention to the narrow terms of the order.

I am not accusing the Government of using the pension arrangements as the motivating factor in perpetuating the dispute. The charge is that they are perpetuating the dispute anyway. The secondary charge is that, once they started the nonsense of threatening signal workers with £1,700 losses, as result of £50 million being taken out of their pension entitlements, it was necessary to show that there was another side to the dispute coin. There is a potential gain to the Government if the dispute continues. That is all we have sought to demonstrate.

It is much more important to get the dispute settled than to set out that territory. That means that both sides in politics should step back from the dispute and that the negotiations take place—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is now referring to the general dispute, and is not linking it, as he did previously, with the order under consideration. I ask him to restrain himself.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that that point has been made.

In the debate, we have proven conclusively that settlements take account retrospectively. We have also proved conclusively that the pension fund of signalmen and employees in other sectors of the railway industry is under threat if settlements are not reached by 30 September. We have linked that threat to the order under consideration.

We have no specific objection to that order, but we have made it absolutely clear that, although we do not contest it, we are not acquiescing with the general principle that has guided what has happened to the railway workers' pension fund. That outcome is a by-product of fragmentation and the potential, but not yet delivered privatisation.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) that one of the great dilemmas in this issue is whether the Government thought first of railway privatisation and then recognised that, as a by-product, they might get their hands on £4 billion of railway pension fund money, or whether they thought, first, that they would go for the pension fund, but, in order to do that, they would have to break up the railways.

We have won half the battle in that the Government will not directly get their hands on the railway pension fund money. We shall win the other half of the battle, which is to stop them privatising the railways.

11.34 pm

Mr. Freeman: May I correct some misapprehensions, so that pensioners and contributing members of the British Rail pension fund are properly informed about this debate?

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) raised a number of issues and asked me a number of questions. First, he referred to the change in employment patters and therefore the pension liabilities building up in the pension fund. He is right to say that the number of signalmen has been substantially reduced from 7,600 in 1980 to 4,940 at the end of 1993. But, within the change in the total numbers employed and, therefore, the pension liabilities accruing, a dramatic change in grading has occurred. More signalmen are now on the top grades. In 1980, 22 per cent. of signalmen were on the bottom grade, grade A; by the end of 1993, only 9 per cent. were on grade A. So a reduction in the number of signalmen has been brought about by substantial investment over the past 10 years, resulting in higher grading as signalmen perform more complicated tasks, better pay and higher pension-accruing liabilities. The tragedy is that that has resulted in an increase in basic pay, not in allowances.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman said that the Government briefed *The Independent*. The Government have not briefed *The Independent* and the figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred are not correct. He said that £100 million from the pay restructuring fund might be attributed to the signalmen; I believe that the figure is closer to £30 million. And he obviously reaches the figure of £50 million by dividing that mythical £100 million by two and calculating what might go to the closed fund.

Mr. Wilson *rose—*

Mr. Freeman: Let me first answer the hon. Gentleman's point. The £1,700 per head to which he referred is a figment of *The Independent*'s imagination.

The importance for the signalmen is to so restructure their pay that their pension calculation is improved. They should agree with Railtrack the restructuring of their pay and allowances not just for their pensions but for their mortgages, which are calculated on the basis of their basic pay, not their total pay because some of the allowances are not guaranteed.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about the solvency pledge. The Government do not determine the allocation of the surplus. It has been determined by the two actuaries —the scheme actuary and the Government actuary. It has not been Ministers' responsibility to decide that. Simply to allocate part of the initial surplus to the closed fund does not help Government public expenditure because the more money that is allocated to the closed fund, the less is allocated to the open fund and the higher the subsidy required from the franchising director. This allocation was done strictly on the basis of actuarial neutrality.

Mr. Wilson: I cannot pursue all the points that I would wish, but on the £50 million vis-a-vis £1,700, we agreed earlier that £600 million is left in the fund. Will the Minister confirm that the two categories still to be settled out of it are the drivers and the signalmen? If they divide numerically on roughly a 4.5:1 ratio and the figure is not, as I suggested, half of £100 million, which is £50 million, where does the rest of that fund go? My figures, which are the same as those which *The Independent* arrived at, are logical. There seems to be a large gap in the figures that the Minister suggested.

Mr. Freeman: We have no idea what the drivers may settle for in terms of restructuring their pay and allowances. Those negotiations have been desolatory and have been continuing for a number of years. I hope that they will reach a conclusion. I repeat what I said at the outset of the debate: it has long been held to be a sensible target to create a new joint industry scheme effective from 1 October. The signalmen's strike occurred long after that target was set. If the dispute is settled before 1 October, a

portion of the pay and restructuring reserve can attach itself directly to the earnings of signal men and women, and their pensions will benefit.

That is a statement of fact. If the drivers do not settle, they will have a claim on the generality of the surplus allocated to their own sections in the joint industry scheme. I have spelt out the truth as clearly as I can.

I shall briefly mention the other contributions to the debate. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) that we want a modern railway industry, with a modern pay structure, because that means that one gets a decent pension scheme, which means that railwaymen and women can look forward to a decent pension in retirement. It also means that they are able to borrow properly from the building societies on the basis of higher basic pay and lower allowances.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) spoke about the responsibility for creating fear of exploitation and the loss of assets. That charge cannot be levelled at the Government. The Government have not been creating the fear in the minds of pensioners. I think that other politicians have done so. It certainly does not help the peace of mind of pensioners, who do not understand the details and complexities of the reform of the pension scheme.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) spoke about the Transport Act 1980 payments. They will not cease; they will continue. Fifty per cent. of the payments to the closed fund will continue, fifty per cent. will be deferred, with interest attaching to that deferment, and payments will be made in order to honour the guarantee of RPI indexed pensions. That is an excellent provision for the closed section of the pension scheme.

Mr. Heppell *rose—*

Mr. Freeman: Will the hon. Gentleman let me finish now?

Finally, there is no truth in the allegation that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) makes that the Government want to seek to drag out the signalmen's dispute until September, in order to benefit in some unexplained way from the reorganisation of the pension fund. Every strike day costs £10 million. That is a loss to the railway industry and to the country. The sooner that the strike is settled, the better.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the draft Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Freeman.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Pesticides

That the draft Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Crops, Food and Feeding Stuffs) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Stonebridge Housing Action Trust

That the draft Stonebridge Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Education (Inter-authority Recoupment)

That the draft Education (Inter-authority Recoupment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 17th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Insurance Premium Tax

That the Insurance Premium Tax (Taxable Insurance Contracts) Order 1994 (S.I., 1994, No. 1698), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Postal Services

That this House takes notes of European Community Documents Nos. 7190/92 and 7133/93, relating to the development of the single market for postal services; supports the Government's view that the deregulatory thrust of the Commission's Green Paper should be welcomed, whilst reserving judgement on the proposals to liberalise direct mail and all intra-Community and international mail; and urges the Commission to make progress on the formulation of specific proposals.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Question agreed to.

Oldchurch Hospital, Romford

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

11.42 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): I greatly value the opportunity of raising on the Adjournment the issue of the proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital in my constituency at Romford. I have lost count of the times that I have had to mention threats to Oldchurch hospital on the Floor of the House before Ministers during the 20 years that I have served here, but once again I find it necessary to do so on behalf of my constituents, and many other people outside my constituency, who have expressed their outright opposition to the latest proposal.

In January, in response to a parliamentary question from me, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) stated that the Secretary of State had received a petition of about 46,000 signatures and about 17,000 pre-printed letters and postcards from members of the public, as well as letters from individuals, and of course hon. Members.

The closure has been condemned by the London borough of Havering, of which Romford is a part, and by the London borough of Barking and Dagenham. It is opposed not only by myself, but my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who, as a Minister, has to observe ministerial silence in this place on the subject. It is also opposed by the newly elected hon. Members for Barking (Ms Hodge) and for Dagenham (Ms Church), who I hope may be successful in catching your eye during the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

If public consultation is to mean anything, the verdict can be seen only as an emphatic thumbs down. Of course, it is not a Government proposal; its sponsor is the Barking and Havering health authority, which acts as purchaser, aided and abetted by the Havering hospitals trust as provider. My hon. Friend the Minister, whom I welcome and thank for being here tonight, is required to act as arbiter and judge between the local managers of the national health service and the public they are there to serve.

The strategy has now been approved in principle by the North Thames regional health authority and passed to the Secretary of State for decision. The region was the original author of the strategy. It is a tale not of two cities but of two hospitals—Oldchurch hospital in Romford in my constituency and Harold Wood hospital in the Upminster constituency. Throughout the 1980s repeated attempts have been made to close services at Oldchurch in favour of Harold Wood. Capital investment has been largely directed towards Harold Wood, widening the gap between the two hospitals and hastening the day when Oldchurch hospital can be closed, or virtually closed.

That is the point that we have now reached. Once the accident and emergency unit goes, other major specialties will go too and we will effectively have one district general hospital for a district of more than 400,000 people and an above average instance of ill health in parts of the district.

When the proposal for the Havering hospitals trust—note the plural, Madam Deputy Speaker—was brought forward as recently as February 1992 by the previous chairman, it was accepted that there would need to be some rationalisation of services between the two sites, as took place, for example, in the case of the ear, nose and throat service. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who is in his place tonight, was with me in expressing concern when we discussed that prospect with the chairman at the time.

At that time it was stated that

"no significant change is envisaged in the disposition of accident and emergency"

and that

"trauma and orthopaedics will be retained on both sites as there is a close clinical link with accident and emergency services."

Yet within weeks of the trust coming into force, A and E was targeted for rationalisation. The two hospitals are now officially described as hot and cold sites and Oldchurch at Romford is the one to get the cold shoulder.

On 9 June 1992, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) wrote to me as follows:

"You implied that the unit could be trying to achieve a single site strategy through the back door. Havering hospitals final application for NHS Trust status describes a twin site strategy. If we approve the application, then the NHS Trust will be required to abide by that strategy."

The trust was approved and Oldchurch may be retained as a site, but reduced in size. On present plans, it will be not much more than a hi-tech cottage hospital providing out-patient clinics and elective day surgery.

So much for the background. The community health council, whose resolute stand on the issue of accident and emergency services is the sole safeguard against the strategy being rubber stamped, has conceded a reduction of two A and E units to one, but believes that if there is to be one it should be centralised at Oldchurch. That is the position that I support tonight. It is not the least irony that it is proposed that all A and E services in the district should be centralised at Oldchurch while expansion proceeds at Harold Wood. That compounds the waste of public assets implied by the abandonment of past investment at Oldchurch hospital.

The nub of the argument was set out in my question in April this year:

"Should not ease of access by road and proximity to the main centres of population be the overriding factors in determining the location of casualty departments? Does not that consideration point to the continuing need for Oldchurch hospital in that all important life-and-death role?"—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1994; Vol. 242, c. 93.]

There is also the question of capacity. Other hon. Members may speak of that, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall), who has concerns relating to his local hospital.

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): I do, indeed, have concerns. We have a new hospital, the old one having closed approximately a year ago. Our A and E cases increased by 13 cases in the first year. If the A and E unit goes from Oldchurch, it is expected that that figure will increase by a further 25,000 cases in a year, which would mean a further 100 beds to our hospital. That would certainly mean a very large expansion programme on a new hospital that has just been built.

Sir Michael Neubert: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for those figures and for painting a rather wider picture than I can from the vantage point of Barking and Havering health district. We know that the ricochet effect of the closure of A and E services, say, from Bart's eastward out as well as from Oldchurch westward in, could have on other hospitals in the wider area of north-east London.

I return now to the two main considerations that I have highlighted. Romford is at the centre of a strategic road network, and Oldchurch hospital is on a dualled ring road close to the centre of the town. Access is easy from east London and Essex—it has to be, for Romford to have acquired the reputation of a thriving commercial and retail centre. Harold Wood, by contrast, is some miles to the east and reached only by roads which were once and are now not much more than country lanes. Romford is much closer to the densest population, where, on average, accidents are more likely to happen, and to those areas of above-average illness and deprivation, which are a major feature of the district.

As distance and travelling time are of the essence in an emergency, Romford is much the more suitable place to have the only A and E department if there is to be only one. Let me illustrate the point by specific reference to the annual report of the director of public health, 1993, entitled "Bringing Health to Life in Barking and Havering". It states, on page 31:

"In Barking and Havering, there are major contrasts between the localities."

It takes as a yardstick mortality from coronary heart disease at ages under 65. The current national average is 58 per 100,000. The district average is 57, but that represents a twofold spread from 39 per 100,000 in one part of the district to 71 per 100,000 in another. The report goes on to point out:

"at ward level variations are even sharper,"

and cites 97 per 100,000 in Goresbrook compared with 25 per 100,000 at Upminster, which is very comparable with what it calls

"more affluent Harold Wood".

The conclusion is clear. If I am under 65, live in the west of the district and suffer a heart attack—I am three or four times more likely to have a heart attack in the west than if I lived in the east of the district—I would want the A and E department to be at Romford rather than Harold Wood. The extra travelling time might well prove fatal.

The health authority defends its strategy by all kinds of arguments: from paramedics attending every emergency, to green field helicopter sites, to minor injury units around every other corner. But my constituents are not convinced that that represents the real world, and, unlike the authority, they do not believe in the priority of "timescale financial and logistical reasons" to use the phrase used by the authority in defending its proposal.

My constituents believe that the patient should come first. It would be irresponsible not to put health needs higher, when two recent press reports record Havering hospital trust as bottom of more than 30 authorities for assessing people quickly in the A and E units—now, before two units are reduced to one.

The London ambulance service is the slowest in the country in responding to 999 emergencies. The North Thames regional health authority, in a debate which, it is reported, raised many doubts, approved the strategy in principle, but hedged it about with such an extraordinary number of caveats—I could list them if there were time, as set out in its letter of 21 June to the chief executive of Barking and Havering health authority—that one wonders how approval could be given on such a conditional basis. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, for his part, will not be prepared to accept such a flawed strategy. Meantime, he may be interested to know that the region has apparently given permission for preliminary building work to start at Harold Wood. So much for the process of consultation.

11.54 pm

Ms Judith Church (Dagenham): I thank the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) for giving me a moment to speak tonight and for raising this important matter. Although Oldchurch hospital is in his constituency, it is only a few hundred metres from my constituency.

The proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital is yet another ill-judged decision which has been thrown up by the national health service market that the Government have created. Why is it closing? It is closing to save money. The people of Dagenham need the accident and emergency unit. To get to Harold Wood, which will be the nearest alternative, will take an extra 15 minutes. That is an extra 15 minutes on a Sunday morning when there is little traffic. In peak periods, it will take considerably longer.

Last week, in a two-hour period, 59 people attended the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch suffering from asthma and other breathing difficulties as a result of the dreadful air pollution over the city. If the accident and emergency unit at Oldchurch hospital closes, people will lose their lives as the ambulances do not get through to Harold Wood.

I hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister will reconsider the proposals when they come through and that this hopelessly ill-judged decision will not be taken. It is a decision against which the people of Dagenham voted significantly in the recent by-election.

11.56 pm

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): I thank the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) for allowing us to participate in the debate. Although Oldchurch hospital is in his constituency, it serves the needs of people from my constituency. I ask the Minister to consider rejecting the proposals that have been put to the Secretary of State for the closure of the accident and emergency departments at Oldchurch hospital.

The Government's reforms have the stated objectives of putting the patients first. I suggest that the basic principle behind the proposals is that we push the patients to the bottom of the pile.

I should like to raise two issues briefly with the Minister. First, the proposals reflect broken trust. When the Havering hospital trust was first established, those responsible for so doing gave an undertaking that they would not proceed with the closure of the A and E department at Oldchurch. Within weeks of attaining trust status, the trust started consulting on the proposals.

Secondly, the trust has stated that the closure of the A and E department will not lead to the closure of the Oldchurch hospital. I do not believe that. If the A and E department of any hospital is closed, that hospital is condemned to a slow and painful death. I should like an assurance from the Minister that, if he accepts the proposals, we shall still have Oldchurch hospital as a district general hospital to serve the needs of the locality.

The closure is predicated on false assumptions. It is predicated on the assumption that GP facilities have improved. They have not. They are among the worst in the country, and none achieve high status. It is predicated on

[Ms Margaret Hodge]

the assumption that we have a better ambulance service with more paramedics. We all know that the ambulance service is deteriorating. It is predicated on the assumption that we have minor injuries units. None is in place yet.

It is predicated on the assumption that there is a better transport infrastructure for access to Harold Wood. There has not been even an application for planning permission. It is predicated on the assumption that there are sufficient beds in the remaining hospitals to take up the closure of Oldchurch A and E. We know that Harold Wood does not even have enough beds simply to cope with the demands from the A and E department.

No other health authority is attempting to serve the needs of a community of 400,000 people from one site only. That is what North Thames regional health authority proposes to do. It is our view that if the proposals were accepted by the Secretary of State, up to 40,000 accident and emergency patients would have nowhere to go and that those patients would be at the bottom of the pile.

11.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on raising this matter, which is clearly of great interest to his constituents and is clearly causing them a great deal of concern. He and the hon. Members for Barking (Ms Hodge) and for Dagenham (Ms Church) have pointed out that these are proposals and that they have been made by the local trust.

I am able to say only a limited amount at this stage. I have listened carefully to what has been said. I am aware that reviews have been undertaken into services in the two hospitals and that the trust has undertaken an evaluation. The conclusion of the trust's review was that both Harold Wood and Oldchurch hospitals would be required for the foreseeable future, but that action and emergency services should be located at Harold Wood. The health authority has arrived at a broadly similar conclusion.

I should like to make some general observations about the provision of accident and emergency services. Obviously, it is vital that all people living in the area should have access to the best A and E services available. We should be looking for first-class services, supported by the necessary back-up. They should deal with the full range of injuries and illnesses at any time, day or night, and should be flexible enough to deal with the characteristic peaks and troughs.

To perform to that high standard, major accident and emergency departments need direct access to a wide range of acute specialty and support services on the same hospital site. Many health service districts have concentrated their A and E services on one site to achieve that. That is in line with the National Audit Office report on A and E which was highly critical of "split site" arrangements and said that they

"jeopardised the treatment of patients."

The 1992 report of the national confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths concluded:

"The problems caused by the requirement for consultants (and their teams) to work and be on call regularly on more than one NHS site are well known. The use of split sites should be historical."

The message, therefore, is that the best accident and emergency services come from larger departments. Research shows that the incidence of preventable deaths is reduced by concentrating highly experienced medical and nursing staff on one location.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Romford said, the community health council has apparently accepted the argument for one site and there seems to be—I hesitate to say this, but I think that it is right—a measure of agreement that accident and emergency facilities in the area should be rationalised at one site. Evidently, considerable disagreement exists about which site that should be.

A number of arguments exist for rationalising at the Oldchurch site and a number for rationalising at the Harold Wood site. Among the arguments for Oldchurch would be better access for Dagenham and Barking residents, who are the major users of emergency services. It might be said that the accident and emergency service should be located nearer those residents because of the relative deprivation and the problems of the somewhat underdeveloped primary care services in the area.

Reference has been made to ambulance journey times. I agree that the performance of the London ambulance service has been disappointing compared with other parts of the country, but we have considerable confidence that it will improve. In an age of paramedics—we are aiming soon to have a paramedic on every front-line vehicle—the location of accident and emergency departments, in terms of trauma, is perhaps becoming subsidiary to the location of ambulances and the ability to get an ambulance to the scene.

Again, it has been said that closing Oldchurch A and E would put too much pressure on neighbouring hospitals, including King George and the Newham general. Likewise, the population of Dagenham and Barking seems likely to increase as housing developments in the east Thames corridor get off the ground, not forgetting that cancer and neuroscience specialties are already located at Oldchurch.

The arguments for Harold Wood include, importantly, the fact that changes could be achieved much more quickly on the Harold Wood site because there are far fewer constraints and because the layout of existing buildings at Oldchurch mitigates against development.

There is undoubtedly, for the same reason, the question of difference of cost. There is no doubt that existing facilities at Harold Wood are of a higher standard, and the backlog of maintenance costs is high at Oldchurch.

The specialty reviews considered Oldchurch to be unsuitable for retention of cancer and neuroscience work, and clearly the local health authorities support development of these specialties at Harold Wood. It has been suggested to me that the London ambulance service favours Harold Wood if there is to be a single-site option.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Romford knows, the health authority met formally on 7 April to consider the outcome of its consultation. I understand that the local community health council has asked for further appraisal of the proposed location. At its meeting on 5 May, the health authority decided to stick with the proposals and, as the CHC maintained its opposition, the matter was referred to the regional health authority.

I am told that there was considerable debate at the regional health authority meeting on 13 June, when a decision was taken to support the strategy of centralising services at Harold Wood, but with three qualifications: that appropriate alternative arrangements should be in place

before any closure of A and E facilities; that adequate arrangements should be made and implemented for road access to Harold Wood; and that adequate and appropriate interim arrangements should be in place for the redevelopment phase.

I understand the strength of feeling about this matter and I confirm that if the matter comes to Ministers, what has been said this evening will be taken into account. I have no doubt that I can include my hon. Friends the Members for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) in the concern that has been expressed about the matter.

I cannot say more than that at present, as all hon. Members who have spoken will understand, but I recognise that this is a matter of deep concern.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HILL SAMUEL BANK AND UNITED DOMINIONS TRUST BILL [*Lords*]

Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

MALVERN HILLS BILL [*Lords*]

Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Diversification Strategies

1. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to study attempts at defence diversification strategies in other NATO states.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): My Department has no plans for such a study.

Ms Eagle: I thank the Minister for that surprising response. Given the money and effort that the Clinton Administration are putting into defence diversification in America, and given that last week's announcement meant the loss of 18,500 more jobs in defence-related industries in this country, why on earth will the Government not consider setting up a proper defence diversification agency to deal with some of the issues?

Mr. Aitken: I know that the idea of a defence diversification agency is the one and only policy that unites the entire Labour party. Labour puts the diversification agency first; we put the front line first.

However, the hon. Lady's bright idea is not very workable or sensible. For a start, such a study would really be a non-examination of non-strategies. No European NATO state has a defence diversification policy, for the simple reason that our partners believe—as we do—that such a policy is best decided on by industry, rather than Government trying to make decisions that are really the province of business.

As for the American experience, it has been much criticised. It covers a number of areas that are already covered by Government Departments in this country, such as resettlement for all service men. *The Wall Street Journal* recently described the American diversification policy as "unblemished by success".

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my hon. Friend recall that the Minister for Industry obtained European Commission approval for intervention funding for the naval ship-builders Swan Hunter for the construction of merchant vessels? In that context, will my hon. Friend take heart from the willingness of the owner of Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie in another NATO country—France—to invest in Swan Hunter if Her Majesty's Government will place the order for the refitting of the landing-ship logistics potential of the Sir Bedivere with Swan Hunter? Is not this a case of another NATO country's investment making unnecessary diversification funding?

Mr. Aitken: We have made it clear that foreign ownership is no bar to the future ownership of Swan Hunter. As for my hon. Friend's question about funding in general, that is properly the province of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who has been extremely effective and sympathetic in trying to work out a policy for this difficult subject.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister feel no conscience at all about the tens of thousands of defence workers whom he sacked last week? Why does he refuse to contemplate establishing a defence diversification agency as part of a diversification strategy that would provide packages of assistance for the downsized defence communities, and also help the defence industry to diversify its technology and skill in the civil market? The United States has done it; the European Community has done it; why will not the British Government do it?

Mr. Aitken: The British Government have done something rather better. The hon. Gentleman must have been asleep lately. The question relates to defence diversification for industry, and if the hon. Gentleman had been awake he would have noticed that "Front Line First" announced either orders or invitations to tender that are worth more than £5 billion to British industry and that will underpin or create some 10,000 jobs in our defence industries. It is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to adopt a whingeing, carping tone when he should be welcoming the statement.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who call for a defence diversification agency have learnt nothing from the 1970s when Governments were unsuccessful at picking winners but adept at spending hundreds of millions of pound in trying to do so?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Labour party has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. It wants to take us back to the old days of clause 4 ideology, of looking after the means of production, distribution and exchange and back to the National Enterprise Board and quangos, all of them doing jobs much better done by industry itself.

Gulf War Syndrome

2. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set up an independent inquiry into Gulf war syndrome.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I have no intention of doing so, as there

remains no clinical evidence that those who served in the British armed forces in the Gulf conflict are suffering from unexplained symptoms that would call for such an inquiry.

Mr. Campbell: If the Americans have discovered that there is such a disease and are paying compensation to their armed forces, should not we be paying ours and taking a serious look at the problems facing them? Or is it the case that when there is a war, we wave the union flag and tell our lads how good they are before they go abroad to fight and call them heroes, but turn our back on them when they need our help? It is always the same with this Government and they have been 50-faced on this issue—let us pay our lads now.

Mr. Hanley: Two points need to be made in answer to that question. First, in July last year I invited anyone who believed that he was suffering from the syndrome to which the hon. Gentleman referred to come forward. In the whole of last year, 52 people came forward, of whom 27 have now seen medical examiners—their general practitioners—and 17 have been found to be suffering from recognised health conditions, none of them peculiar to their service in the Gulf. Solicitors have also put forward the names of some 300 further people, but we have not been given details about them and they have not submitted themselves to medical examination. We are, therefore, trying to do all that we can to ascertain whether their illnesses have been caused by anything that happened in the Gulf, but, at the moment, the evidence is to the contrary.

Secondly, on the American evidence, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is taking the words of Back Benchers—be they Senators or Congressmen—and making them into a claim by the Pentagon. There is absolutely no evidence from the United States that there is a "syndrome", and there is certainly no scientific or medical evidence of chemical or biological warfare being deployed against us, on any level.

Mr. Fabricant: Is not it the case that the shells that have been accused of causing the syndrome are made of depleted heavy metals with a lower atomic number than the normal isotope? Would not anyone with an A-level or even an O-level in physics know that there is less radioactivity in such shells than in the luminous dial of an average watch?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that one of the possible causes of any so-called Gulf war syndrome was depleted uranium shells and that the toxicity of depleted uranium is similar to that of lead.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that there may be a case for an investigation, not necessarily into what happened to British troops in the Gulf but into pre-medication against possible poison gas attacks? Is not there something that we could learn for the future?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that yet another suspected cause of a possible syndrome were the injections given to our troops before they left. It has all been investigated carefully, and the Surgeon General recently wrote to the *British Medical Journal* to say that there was absolutely no evidence of any cause from the source to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Contracts

3. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of defence contracts has been awarded to United Kingdom companies; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Measured by volume, United Kingdom companies have been awarded 90 per cent. of the direct contracts placed by the Department during the past 12 months.

Mr. Spring: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of how welcome the defence orders announcements have been in my constituency, where already Graseby Microsystems is supplying electronic equipment for Challenger tanks and Vinten is supplying reconnaissance pods for the Royal Air Force? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that they are immense technological spin-offs, wholly beneficial to British industry overall, and a result of our defence industry activities?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is quite right. Indeed, far from the defence industries having taken for granted those announcements, they were extremely relieved to hear that the success of the "Front Line First" study had enabled us to confirm those orders, thereby securing up to 10,000 jobs and £5 billion worth of investment in those industries.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In the course of his extensive statement last week, the Secretary of State referred to a number of procurement programmes, but made no reference to the Hercules replacement programme, to the attack helicopter or, indeed, the support helicopter, all of which, in their own way, are important to British companies. Can he confirm that those are still in the long-term costing? Will he tell us why they were not referred to last week? When may we expect decisions in respect of all three?

Mr. Rifkind: I can confirm that all three are still in the programme. They were not referred to last Thursday because we had nothing new to say on those matters. We are considering the various tenders or continuing the contractual negotiations on the support and attack helicopters and we shall report to the House as soon as those are concluded. We are assessing the short-term requirements of transport aircraft in view of the age of the current Hercules fleet.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the most important thing of all is to buy the right equipment for our service men? As his answer shows, British industries are manufacturing the right equipment. However, there is also the question of mid-life updates and refits. For example, the Tornado GR1 refit is on order, which is a massive investment. There is also the question of the C-130J aircraft in which there is human British input.

Mr. Rifkind: That is indeed the case and we are anxious to ensure that United Kingdom defence industries, which are second to none in the world, as their export achievements demonstrate, should continue to have a strong home base to ensure that they can make the maximum contribution to the national interest.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Secretary of State will be aware that the Swan Hunter shipyard went into receivership more than a year ago. He will be aware of the heroic struggle for survival by the shipyard workers on Tyneside. He will be aware that that struggle will have cumulated after his decision to procure the Sir Bedivere at Swan Hunter or elsewhere. Is he now able to tell the House where the Sir Bedivere will be procured?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there is a question specifically on that matter on the Order Paper. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to wait.

Mr. Gallie: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the defence White Paper "Front Line First" offers a great opportunity for the civilian sector to get involved with basic pilot training? Is he aware of the excellent facilities at Prestwick, with the British Aerospace flying college?

Mr. Rifkind: There are indeed good opportunities for the private sector, including those at Prestwick. I also draw attention to the increased opportunities for local employment in Benbecula following the decision to retain the range and the likely increase of contractorisation there and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Martlew: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Ministry of Defence has approached the United States Government with regard to the possibility of purchasing an American aircraft as an alternative to the Eurofighter 2000?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I will not confirm it because it is not true. As with the procurement of any large project, before coming to a final decision on production, we wish to be aware of the available alternatives. I must emphasise that Eurofighter remains the firm commitment of the British Government to meet the needs of the Royal Air Force in the next century.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of my constituents who work at British Aerospace were delighted by last week's announcement of the mid-life update of Tornado aircraft? They will also be made happier by the commitment that my right hon. and learned Friend has just given on Eurofighter 2000. They would be ecstatic if they were also given the opportunity to work on the replacement for the Hercules, if that large aircraft were given an opportunity to compete with the C-130J in future.

Mr. Rifkind: Ecstasy is not normally at the disposal of the Ministry of Defence. Even if we cannot provide ecstasy, we will certainly do our best to come to a sensible and wise decision about the matter that my hon. Friend raised.

Ex-service Personnel

4. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet colleagues from other Government Departments to discuss arrangements for ex-service men and women.

Mr. Hanley: We meet regularly to discuss a wide range of matters, including those relevant to ex-service men and women.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Minister agree that our ex-service men and women deserve the very best possible treatment? Will he, therefore, pledge, as the Labour party has done, actively to consider setting up a special unit in the Ministry of Defence to look after their special needs?

Mr. Hanley: On the face of it, the idea is an attractive and intriguing suggestion, but it does not stand up to closer inspection. The reason is that we have the best health service in the world, the most comprehensive social security service in the world and fully comprehensive housing assistance. There is, therefore, no reason why any veteran should not find the answer to his or her problems. If there are deficiencies in any Department, veterans can discuss with Ministers ways in which to try to find solutions to them. Indeed, a number of Departments regularly talk to veterans. The Department of Social Security, for example, primarily has responsibility for war pensions. My noble Friend, Lord Astor, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, regularly meets representatives of the veterans' associations.

Mr. Gale: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to remind the House of the impressive percentage of men and women leaving the armed services who then secure worthwhile and rewarding employment in other walks of life? Does he agree that the training, loyalty and discipline provided by the armed services are an extremely good base for further and future careers? Is not it a fact that entry to the armed services qualifies people not only for a rewarding career in the forces, but for a career thereafter?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He does a service to the House in reminding us all that the United Kingdom's defence forces are the best-trained work force in the United Kingdom. He also makes a good point when he says that many of those leaving the armed forces go into work quickly. The statistics are that 55 per cent. of those leaving the forces walk straight into a job and that 80 per cent. are employed within two months of leaving the armed forces. There is no doubt that being in the armed forces prepares one not only for defending the United Kingdom but for any other job, should one want to take it up.

Mr. Redmond: The Minister must be aware that with the closure of RAF Finningley, he will create much unemployment in Doncaster, especially among service personnel. Which Departments has he met to discuss the impact on unemployment of the closure of RAF Finningley? What steps does he intend to take to ensure that the RAF personnel there get a square deal?

Mr. Hanley: The closure is subject to consultation, and the consultation period of three months has now begun. We will willingly discuss with the unions and local people anything to do with the future of those who work at RAF Finningley. The hon. Gentleman will remember that, only a few weeks ago, I received a delegation including him, local council representatives and local developers when we discussed what plans there might be if the site became available. The hon. Gentleman is being most constructive in trying to help the local community to come to terms with that closure.

Bosnia

5. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British forces deployment in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: Planning is in hand to enable the 1st battalion of the Duke of Wellington's regiment to be replaced when its tour in Bosnia expires in September. Whether the replacement will go ahead will depend on the situation on the ground nearer the time and on prospects for an overall peace settlement. We will keep those matters under close review in the coming weeks.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the performance of Her Majesty's forces in Bosnia is very much to their credit and to the credit of this country, and that they are worthy of our permanent membership of the Security Council of the United Nations, of our role as an active member of NATO and of our role as a member of the contact group? Will my right hon. and learned Friend note that the British Government will have the continuing support of the public and of the House if they give the highest priority to the safety of our service men?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that the UN sees the British forces as being among the most experienced, well-trained and committed of all those serving in Bosnia. We welcome that recognition, and we also recognise the important point that my hon. Friend made when he emphasised the paramount need to ensure the safety of our forces operating in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Gapes: Given the remarks made by General Sir Michael Rose yesterday that if the 18,000 troops who are currently in Bosnia were withdrawn, they would have to be replaced by up to 50,000 combat troops, how many troops from this country do we have on standby ready to send in? What commitments does the Secretary of State have from the United States Government that they would support such an action, given that it is their proposal to lift the arms embargo that would precipitate it?

Mr. Rifkind: General Rose did not suggest, nor would the Government approve, the sending of British forces to Bosnia in a combat role. We have made it quite clear from the very beginning that there is no question of such a deployment.

Royal Air Force (Maintenance Duties)

6. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the performance of private contractors in RAF maintenance duties.

Mr. Aitken: The overall performance of private contractors in carrying out maintenance work for the RAF is good. Only in a very small number of cases has quality fallen short of that required. In those rare cases, we seek either redress or rectification under the terms of the contract.

Mr. Jones: How can the Minister step up the rate of civilianisation of maintenance at RAF St. Athan when, last year, damage was done to Tornado aircraft which led to the loss of millions of pounds to the taxpayer? There is also deep unease among the 1,800 personnel at RAF Sealand in my constituency at the likely pace of market testing and civilianisation. Can the Minister assure me that there will be no compulsory redundancies at RAF Sealand?

Mr. Aitken: I am a little surprised by the hon. Gentleman's emphasis on the great concern felt there, because not only are RAF workers doing maintenance jobs in his constituency but—as he often comes and tells me when he lobbies—a number of British Aerospace workers, whose skill he praises, are also employed there. We believe that there is no contradiction in the Government's policy of having some of our aircraft maintenance done by uniformed personnel and some by well-trained civilian personnel, such as the British Aerospace workers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It is true that we are increasing the market testing programme, and we do not think that the isolated and regrettable episode that he described in any way suggests that the whole policy is wrong.

Mr. Dykes: Will the Minister ensure that, as RAF Stanmore Park is run down and closed, all the personnel on duty there will be RAF personnel until that moment comes?

Mr. Aitken: I will look into the point that my hon. Friend raises. I think that he is correct, but I will check the facts and write to him.

Mr. Hardy: Is not it the case that private contractors do not always provide the best buy, as was demonstrated not long ago at RAF Sealand? Will the Minister comment on the fact that some private contractors appear not to reinvest at all in training, and that they rely entirely on the recruitment of ex-service men who have skills learned in the services? As that pool dries up, will not the taxpayer find himself with a larger bill to pay for the training that some companies are failing to provide?

Mr. Aitken: We believe that there is an ample and adequate supply of skilled civilian aerospace workers to carry an increased share of RAF maintenance. We believe that it is right in terms of quality, and that it is also in the interests of the taxpayer. The hon. Gentleman has expressed concerns on behalf of RAF personnel many times, but, as "Front Line First" makes clear, we are determined to maintain an in-house capability for the maintenance and repair of RAF planes by RAF uniformed personnel.

Armed Forces (Stability)

7. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ensure that there is a period of numerical and funding stability.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of stability. Last Thursday, we showed the Government's determination to preserve the fighting strength of our armed forces and to proceed with a programme of investment to maintain and enhance their operational effectiveness.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his response. [Hon. Members: "Take your hands out of your pockets."] That is from a party that claims to support the disabled, as I am at the moment.

My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the very real concern in the armed forces that there should be

a period of stability henceforth. He will also know that many of his efficiency savings in the announcement last Thursday were welcomed by all who wish to see better armed forces. Does he accept that most Conservative Members will support him in any further determination to increase efficiency, but that they would also want defence expenditure to be maintained at its present level?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the continuing need to achieve greater efficiency and that we should ensure that any changes we make do not act to the detriment of the fighting strength of our armed forces.

Mr. Salmond: On the subject of numbers, is the Secretary of State aware of the phrase, "There are lies, damned lies and statistics?" In which category would he place his Department's estimate of 1,500 job losses in Scotland as a result of his review, when that total excludes the 800 jobs that are being transferred from Rosyth to Portsmouth? Would he care to revise the figures that he and the Secretary of State for Scotland are peddling for defence job losses in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I certainly do not see any need to revise the figures, but I remind the hon. Gentleman of two things. First, several weeks ago he was pontificating about 8,000 job losses in Scotland as a result of any announcement that the Government might make—he is now looking rather foolish. Secondly, as he goes around Scotland promising that the Rosyth naval base would be safeguarded in an independent Scotland, he conveniently forgets to point out that in the same independent Scotland he would close the Faslane base, which would mean at least 4,000 job losses in the west of Scotland.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In recognising the important contribution that the Territorial Army makes to our defence capabilities, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that "Front Line First" ensures that the numbers in the TA will be maintained during the next few years? Is he aware that in October the new headquarters of the Territorial Army will be opened in my constituency? That is evidence of the sort of investment that the Government are making in that important portion of our armed forces.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, the present formed unit strength of the Territorial Army is 59,000 and it is to remain at that strength. We plan an expanded role for the TA, as the pilot scheme that is being carried out in the Falkland islands clearly demonstrates.

Mr. Hutton: Can the Secretary of State confirm that the important contract to design and build a replacement for the Swiftsure class—the batch 2 programme—is now subject to a delay in excess of two years from the timetable that the Government originally announced? Can he tell my constituents and me, therefore, what measures he has in mind to minimise the adverse employment consequences that that delay will mean for my constituents?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman will be well aware, we announced a substantial number of naval orders. The company in his constituency can tender for any of those orders to which it feels able to respond, and it will be in exactly the same position as all other yards.

Rwanda

8. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests he has received to provide troops for peacekeeping purposes in Rwanda.

Mr. Rifkind: We have received no requests to provide troops for the United Nations operation in Rwanda. In response to a UN request for vehicles, we have made 50 trucks available.

Mr. Luff: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend understands the strength of feeling that exists among all our constituents about the appalling humanitarian crisis in Rwanda. Does he also understand that, against the background of the many demands on British forces around the world, there is general support for the view that Francophone countries should take prime responsibility for the situation in Rwanda? Can he assure the House that any requests for specialist miliary assistance that may be forthcoming will be looked on as sympathetically as possible, as was implied in his answer?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, naturally we would do so because we understand the scale of the human tragedy that is unfolding in Rwanda. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has committed more than £11 million bilaterally to help in Rwanda since the crisis began. Relief flights are being sent, containing vehicles, personnel, blankets, plastic sheeting and water carriers. Following yesterday's mortar attack, the closure of Goma airport is delaying their arrival, but flights are being pre-positioned in the region and will fly on to Goma as soon as possible to minimise the delay in delivering those essential supplies.

Mr. Foulkes: If we can send a task force to rescue the Falklands and mobilise huge efforts for the Gulf, surely the British Government can pull out all the stops for the dreadful tragedy that is taking place in Rwanda. Cannot the Secretary of State get together with the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers and make every possible effort to save the millions of people whose lives are threatened in that appalling tragedy?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman would be the first to appreciate that the problem is a humanitarian one requiring a humanitarian response. I have just reported to the House on the steps that are being taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and I am sure that the United Kingdom can hold its head high for the contribution that it is making in helping to minimise the dreadful suffering in Rwanda.

Royal Yacht

9. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review the decision on the future of the Royal Yacht Britannia.

Mr. Hanley: We are currently considering the future of the royal yacht Britannia following her decommissioning in 1997.

Mr. Winterton: Although I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply, it adds little to what we know already. Does not he accept that the royal yacht Britannia is a floating trade ambassador for the United Kingdom? It brings immense status to the UK wherever it goes and it

brings great wealth to the economy of our country. Is not it important that the royal yacht Britannia is either completely refurbished and upgraded, or that a new royal yacht is produced for this country? It is worth every penny that we spend on it.

Mr. Hanley: I agree with my hon. Friend's description of the royal yacht, but even he must recognise that it is now a very aged craft and that it would cost about £17 million to refit, which would extend its life by about only five years. I remind my hon. Friend that the royal yacht has a crew of 220 and that the crew even of a type 23 frigate is some 40 fewer. The costs involved, therefore, must be carefully considered. The royal yacht's trade promotion activities are a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry and they are without dispute. Her Majesty's foreign travel needs are a matter for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This is an important matter and must be carefully considered in the months ahead.

Mr. Mandelson: Does the Minister recall my letter to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence suggesting that the royal yacht Britannia should receive a comfortable and dignified retirement as befits her age in the new maritime heritage centre and marina at Hartlepool? Is he aware that I have discussed the matter personally with Her Majesty the Queen who has expressed her interest in that? Will the Minister confirm—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is proud, but he should not be divulging conversations that he has had with Her Majesty.

Mr. Mandelson: Is the Minister aware that Her Majesty's private secretary has graciously given me permission to disclose that information? Will the Government, therefore, confirm that they will consider the option most positively?

Mr. Hanley: If such are Her Majesty's instructions, I could do no less.

Madam Speaker: It is the Speaker of the House who rules here and not Her Majesty's private secretary.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Bearing in mind the importance of the royal yacht Britannia to our trade promotion prospects, will my hon. Friend redouble his efforts in his discussion with his hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry to see whether some private finance from firms that are likely to benefit from exports could be brought in so that a new royal yacht Britannia could be commissioned?

Mr. Hanley: I can say to my hon. Friend only that that is one of the matters that will be considered. The trade promotion activities of the royal yacht Britannia have been second to none. She has earned billions of pounds of contracts in travelling around the world and we must not lose sight of that. Exactly what the relevance is, however, to Her Majesty's transport needs around the world is a different subject.

United Nations (Peacekeeping)

10. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve the peacekeeping abilities of the United Nations.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Nations Secretary-General has identified a need to strengthen the UN's capacity to conduct peace support operations and has invited proposals from member states. We have made a number of suggestions aimed at reinforcing the UN's ability to plan and run such operations, including an enhanced peacekeeping planning staff and the establishment of a situation centre.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that answer. Has he considered the possible establishment of a UN peacekeeping staff college and does he agree that this country is well suited to housing such an establishment?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not sure that the establishment of a staff college features high among the Secretary-General's priorities. Each country that sends forces to assist UN operations must ensure that it properly understands the needs of the UN, and in this way qualities similar to those that would be achieved by a staff college will be achieved.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the decision taken last week by the German constitutional court that German troops can take part in international peacekeeping operations? Does he agree that far from this causing any concern about the role of German troops, it shows their responsible return to a proper, institutionalised role in peacekeeping around the world?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, indeed; my hon. Friend is correct. With the large increase in UN operations around the world, it is important that as many countries as possible, including Germany, contribute to United Nations operations. Against that background, the decision of the German constitutional court was very much to be welcomed.

Mr. Donald Anderson: In the light of the welcome decision of the federal constitutional court, will the Secretary of State consider holding early discussions with the German and French Governments about humanitarian and peacekeeping operations that might involve former members of the Warsaw treaty organisation, who are keen to have operational experience with NATO, possibly under the auspices of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council?

Mr. Rifkind: We are seized of the desirability of involving those countries. The United Kingdom is helping to train a Baltic battalion, with contributions from each of the three Baltic republics, which is intended to be used in UN operations.

Nuclear Testing

11. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the British nuclear test programme.

Mr. Aitken: There will be no nuclear testing while the United States moratorium continues and we will continue working towards an effective comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Simpson: When the Defence Select Committee tells the House that there is no need for further nuclear testing and the United States moratorium shows that there is no chance of further testing, is the Minister not ashamed that the Government are making no commitment to the completion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty

before the start of the non-proliferation treaty conference next April? Will he give the House that commitment, and is he not ashamed that Britain is the only nuclear power that is having to be dragged into a commitment to a nuclear test ban timetable before the conference starts?

Mr. Aitken: We are not ashamed of any such thing. The United Kingdom is participating fully and positively in negotiations to secure an effective and verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty. These discussions began on 26 January at the conference on disarmament in Geneva and we continue to participate fully in them.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's great skills in last week's announcement on the possible purchase of Tomahawk, but, if we buy Tomahawk, is there any possibility of its having any nuclear tipping?

Mr. Aitken: No, we have no intention of putting nuclear warheads on Tomahawk should its acquisition proceed.

Mr. William O'Brien: When the Minister is considering future nuclear testing, will he bear in mind the victims of past nuclear testing on Christmas island and pay them compensation?

Mr. Aitken: As I explained to the House in a debate on Friday a week or two ago, there is no evidence to suggest that those who took part in the tests are suffering from a higher incidence of cancer or any other disease than a representative section of the population.

Type 23 Frigates

12. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has plans to order a further batch of type 23 frigates later in 1994.

Mr. Aitken: It is our intention to invite tenders for the next batch of type 23 frigates in the coming year.

Mr. Garnier: I understand that HMS Northumberland and HMS Richmond will join the fleet in the next year. That is good news for our procurement industry, but will my hon. Friend confirm that our defence needs on the sea include the submarine fleet and the amphibious fleet and that any advances in the frigate fleet should go hand in hand with procurement across the front line in the Navy?

Mr. Aitken: I agree with my hon. Friend. He and the naval and shipbuilding establishment will be pleased by our announcement under "Front Line First" that invitations to tender will be issued shortly for the LPD replacements, Fearless and Intrepid. We also announced an invitation to tender for batch 2 Trafalgars and an important order worth more than £250 million for seven new mine hunters. I am sure that my hon. Friend will see that, in naval matters, we are putting the front line first.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister take this opportunity to pay tribute to the workers at Swan Hunter who have co-operated so fully in completing the three remaining type 23 frigates? Will he also give the House an assurance this afternoon that he will do all in his power to ensure that competitive facilities remain in Britain to build future type 23 frigates? Does he further understand that anything less than full support would be seen as a gross betrayal to the workers' loyalty on Tyneside?

Mr. Aitken: I am very glad, once again, to pay tribute to the work force at Swan Hunter who, under difficult circumstances, have responded with work of outstanding quality and have shown outstanding loyalty, particularly in completing the type 23 frigates. I said that to Mr. Eddie Darke, the convener of the trade unions up there, and I am glad to make it known to the House. On future facilities, we can rest assured that whatever changes there may be in the shipbuilding industry, it is vital that the facilities to build large ships are retained somewhere in Britain.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the conclusion that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development drew from its perspicacious study of the British economy that the route to higher output, lower unemployment and lower inflation is through sound public finances and deregulation, not placing additional burdens and red tape on business, as advocated by the Opposition parties?

The Prime Minister: I certainly recommend the OECD report to the House for what it says on both the economy and the health service. I hope that Opposition Members will take time to read it—I know that they have been preoccupied, but it is a good read. The point about the OECD report is that it recognises that the policies that the Government have pursued have helped to transform our economic prospects, which are better now than I can remember for many years—we intend to keep them that way.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that in this country we still exempt far too many goods and services from value added tax?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Lady should read all that my right hon. and learned Friend said yesterday before selectively misquoting what he said. I shall remind the right hon. Lady what my right hon. and learned Friend said in reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who is chatting on the front Bench. My right hon. and learned Friend said:

"It is utterly pathetic to come out with constituency letters in which I merely state my long-stated and well-known view that if we were starting again we might have a lower rate of VAT and fewer exemptions. As he knows, that is not policy now".—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1994; Vol.247, c.59.]

Mrs. Beckett: But the Prime Minister is doing it again—he is running away from the question. I am asking him whether he agrees with the Chancellor that too few goods and services are subject to VAT. Surely he knows the answer to that. Most people in this country believe that too much is already subject to VAT and they want to know whether the Government are, as it now appears, looking for

an opportunity to put VAT on fares, books or children's clothes. It seems that the Government want to do that. Will the Prime Minister now admit it?

The Prime Minister: Besides listening to what I said a moment ago, the right hon. Lady might care to look at what I said in the House on 14 June, 17 May and 25 January this year, and on 19 October, 6 May, 23 March and 18 March last year. If she is concerned about extra value added tax, perhaps she will tell me whether she agrees with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who has said in relation to VAT on private schools and private medical care:

"That is something specifically being looked at".

Mrs. Beckett: Surely the Prime Minister realises that the Chancellor has yet again let the cat out of the bag, by giving an indication that the Government want to put VAT on fares, children's clothes and books. The Prime Minister was willing enough to deny his intentions on VAT before the election, when he was seeking votes, so why is he not prepared to come clean now? Does not the Tory party have a party addiction to VAT; and is not that addiction damaging the budget of every British family?

The Prime Minister: So much for a clear denial of extending VAT to private medical health care—we can draw our own conclusions from that.

As for our policy, I refer the right hon. Lady again to what my right hon. and learned Friend said yesterday. As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) knows—he is raising this scare again—this is not our policy now and we are not starting again. I see no likelihood of extending VAT. I look forward to a clear denial of what the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said the other day about his plans to put VAT on private education.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: During his very busy day, will my right hon. Friend accept an invitation from me to visit Macclesfield, which has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country and where manufacturing industry has a very meaningful presence? Will he also accept an invitation to sample the culinary expertise of my constituent, Mrs. Annie May of Sutton, which is near Macclesfield, who won the *Good Housekeeping* recipe competition and gave her £10,000 first prize to Save the Children Fund? Is not that an example of the success of private enterprise and social concern and involvement?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's—*[Interruption.]* I know it is the end of term: relax. My hon. Friend's invitation is irresistible. On a date that I cannot yet give him, I shall be happy to accept it.

As my hon. Friend rightly says, unemployment is falling and has been falling for quite a long time—almost since the shadow Chancellor predicted that it would go up month after month.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Prime Minister list what steps Britain is taking to assist in Rwanda and what further steps he proposes to relieve suffering and save lives from the terrible catastrophe taking place today on Rwanda's borders?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman may know, we have already provided air lifts to help with the food required in Rwanda. They are likely to continue. We are liaising with our partners on what may be done.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend explain why he has decided not to take the opportunity to make a formal statement on the important choice of Mr. Santer as president of the European Commission? Also, why does he not explain why he proposes the appointment of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) as a Commissioner —an appointment which will give much pleasure to all members of the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: Upon the latter point, no formal decision has been made. When I have a decision to announce I will announce it.

As for a statement, none was necessary. If any hon. Member thought that it was necessary, but not forthcoming, he would no doubt have tabled a private notice question.

Q2. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: Does the Prime Minister concede that the 1988 changes in the television concessionary licence scheme have proved to be very unfair—even more than they were previously—and that now that it has been determined that the Government will continue the television licence, will he not now return to 1988 and install some fairness into the system, for all pensioners?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that returning to 1988 is an easy proposition, but I note the point that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Industrial Relations

Q3. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the change in industrial relations in the United Kingdom since the 1970s.

The Prime Minister: The strike statistics speak for themselves. There were fewer strikes last year than in any year since records began. Legislation to establish a fair framework for industrial relations has been a key element in attracting inward investment and creating jobs.

Mr. Bates: As 2 million passengers brace themselves for another day of disruption on our railways, caused by the inflation-busting pay demand of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, can my right hon. Friend confirm that some 75,000 members of the RMT pay their political levy to the Labour party and have been eligible to vote in the Labour party's leadership elections?

The Prime Minister: I was not aware of that, but 75,000 is an awful lot of potential votes. Perhaps we will get a clear condemnation of the strike now that the ballot has closed.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: The next Prime Minister's Question Time is in exactly 13 weeks time. That is three whole months.

What does the Prime Minister think should be done to respond to the representations of Members of Parliament in the meantime? What avenues are supposed to be available to us?

The Prime Minister: The same avenues that have been available to every Government since 1945, including those available to Members of Parliament under previous Labour Governments.

Mr. Paice: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of pressure from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the German Government have withdrawn their totally unwarranted threat to ban British beef? Will he congratulate the European Commission on using sound scientific evidence as the basis for decision making and encourage it to do likewise with future scientific matters?

The Prime Minister: I should certainly be happy to do that and am happy on this occasion to offer my congratulations on the way in which the matter has been handled in Europe. I think that it has been handled very well. The Chief Medical Officer has repeatedly made it clear throughout the saga that British beef can safely be eaten by anyone, both adults and children, including patients in hospital. I am delighted that Germany has confirmed that unilateral measures will not now enter into force. I think that that shows that the whole of the Community, including Germany, now accepts that British beef is safe.

Q5. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Simpson: Does the Prime Minister accept that the £500,000 retirement hand-out paid by Severn Trent Water to its former chairman will go down as the most expensive disconnection in the history of the water industry? Will he explain why, at the end of the 12th wettest winter since 1727, and facing a 67 per cent. increase in their bills to pay for a 60 per cent. increase in profits and a 30 per cent. increase in the top wage increases of management, the public cannot water their own blooming gardens? Does not that amount to one privatisation cock-up too far?

The Prime Minister: On the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, as I have said before, I would expect the shareholders and the regulator to question carefully any salary or payment that proved to be excessive. As for the general question of water privatisation, I think that even the hon. Gentleman will concede that, after years of under investment, there is now a substantial investment to deal with environmental matters, of precisely the sort that Opposition Members have asked for for years.

Q6. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Fox: How much of the fall in Britain's unemployment and the rise in Britain's competitiveness does my right hon. Friend attribute to the Government's supply side reforms, especially labour law reform? Does he think that there is any case for dismantling our labour law reforms and trade union reforms, as suggested by Labour leadership candidates?

The Prime Minister: It is difficult to quantify precisely how much, but I have no doubt that they have had a significant effect. Equally, there is no doubt that a peaceful workplace is a prosperous one. I certainly assure my hon. Friend that, unlike Opposition Members, I have no plans to sweep the board clean and start again.

Q7. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: On the question of VAT which was put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), may I ask the Prime Minister to give us a straight answer to a straight question: will he name one thing, just one thing, on which he will never ever impose VAT?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should look at what I have said in the past when I have made it perfectly clear that I can see no circumstances ever when food would be subject to VAT, and I repeatedly set out the answers to the other points, on the many occasions that I quoted for the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would care to read them.

Forestry Review

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about Forestry.

In March last year, I informed the House that, along with fellow Forestry Ministers, I had asked officials to review the effectiveness of current incentives for forestry investment and options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands; and to make proposals for changes that would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to our other economic and environment policies. My right hon. Friends and I are grateful to the members of the forestry review group for their work and to the thousands of individuals and organisations who made informed and cogent submissions to the group. I also put on record our gratitude to the commission's staff, who have been subject to a period of inevitable uncertainty during the review but who have continued to make a valuable contribution.

It is clear that the present general approach of multi-purpose forestry is widely supported. That approach, which was reaffirmed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the follow-up to the Earth summit in Rio, places emphasis not just on wood production but on encouraging the use of our forests for amenity and environmental benefits. The review looked closely at the way in which this policy is implemented and identified a number of modifications to the commission's woodland management which could further enhance the delivery of multiple objectives. The proposals that I am announcing today will assist in that by making clearer connections in the commission's management system between the objectives, the resources used and the output.

Our review has considered many options for the ownership and management of the Forestry Commission's woodlands. Our analysis has taken into account the many unique features of the forestry industry such as the varied commercial, recreational and environmental interests and the long lead time required before commercial timber can be harvested. Our conclusion is that, at this stage of their development, the Forestry Commission woodlands should remain in the public sector.

Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for improvement. The work of Forest Enterprise, the forest management arm of the commission, should be put on a more businesslike footing and a stronger connection should be established between the resources used and outputs achieved in all its commercial, recreational and environmental activities. We therefore propose that it should be replaced by a new trading body, established as a next steps agency. That trading body will still be part of the Forestry Commission, but it will deal at arm's length with the other parts of the commission. A chief executive will be appointed by open competition.

The remit of the new body will be clearly specified in its framework document and it will work within clear priorities agreed by the Forestry Commissioners and forestry Ministers. Demanding but deliverable performance measures will be set. There will be improved accounting and costing arrangements, helping to ensure that the costs and benefits of commission programmes are better measured. Ministers will be able to judge more closely and more clearly the value of specific proposals. In this way we can ensure that the taxpayer obtains better value for money in terms of timber, amenity and environmental benefits.

The review also looked at incentives for forestry. Through grants, the Forestry Commission supports new planting by the private forestry sector, but, under the existing arrangements, new private sector planting of productive conifer forests has declined. We shall take action to increase it. We shall introduce a flat-rate grant for conifer new planting of £700 per hectare and increase the better land supplement for conifers from £400 per hectare to £600.

Those increased grant levels will give a major boost to conifer planting, which is so important for the new wood processing investors, including those who have been and will be attracted to Britain and who provide many new jobs and wider economic benefits, particularly in rural areas. This conifer planting will, of course, be subject to the environmental safeguards which now operate to protect valuable habitats.

For broadleaf new planting, there will be a grant of £1,350 per hectare for woodlands under 10 hectares and £1,050 per hectare for woodlands of 10 hectares or more. To improve the potential timber quality of those broadleaf-planted areas, we shall require a higher stocking density in order to qualify for the full rate of grant, though there will be exceptions for small woodlands and the planting of native species.

In existing woodlands, we have decided that the level of restocking grant should be reduced to £325 per hectare for conifers and £525 per hectare for broadleaf trees, but the restocking grant will be payable on completion of planting rather than phased over three instalments. Assistance will be introduced for short rotation coppice on set-aside land, although assistance on non-set-aside land will be reduced.

Further details of the new grant arrangements will be available in the Vote Office and will be placed in the Library. I have asked the Forestry Commission to close its existing schemes to new applications at 3.30 pm this afternoon and to reopen the woodland grant scheme in September in time for the new planting season.

The new arrangements are being discussed with the European Commission and are subject to its approval, but I have no doubt that this sensible package of incentive measures will be a boost to the planting of more trees. It will bring in some £4 million of new resources—an increase of more than 10 per cent. in the incentives available to the private sector.

It will come as no surprise to the House that the review confirmed that millions of people enjoy access to our forests and that there is a widespread desire for the enjoyment of our forests to be protected, encouraged and enhanced. In response to that, the Government will take a number of measures to strengthen the arrangements which are available to protect existing public access when the commission sells forests as part of its disposal programme.

Procedures for the selection of forests for sale will be more rigorous; consultation periods will be lengthened and we shall encourage local authorities to consider carefully the need to make access agreements when offered. We shall also make it possible for the Forestry Commission to meet legal costs incurred by local authorities in making access agreements.

The Government will take measures to increase opportunities for public access to forests in those areas

where demand is greatest. We shall provide almost £1 million per annum to allow the Forestry Commission to offer to buy out leasehold interests in those of its leased woodlands, particularly those close to centres of population, where the present lease restricts public access. The special management grant already supports schemes to improve public access to private forests.

We shall also be introducing a new woodland improvement grant to enhance the quality of our forests, both environmentally and for the benefit of the visiting public. A similar sum will also be allocated annually towards the development of the national forest, the central Scotland woodlands and the various community forests to which we made a commitment in our manifesto.

We shall publish shortly a document outlining our proposals in more detail which will offer interested parties the opportunity to comment upon them.

Taken together, the Government's proposals are a comprehensive and imaginative package. They will assist the Forestry Commission and its staff by providing clearer objectives and new challenges and by creating a stable framework for its operations; they will assist the private forestry sector by providing better targeted grants; they will assist wood processors by encouraging increased wood production from our forests; and, finally, they will provide the public with improved opportunities to enjoy the great forests that are such an important national amenity. Together they will increase the benefit to the country of forestry, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Today's statement, delayed and postponed as it has been, represents a humiliating climbdown by the Government as they retreat from their clear and clearly declared ambition to privatise the forests of Britain. In that respect, it is most welcome.

The Government deliberately set out to sell off the country's oldest publicly owned industry in the quick-fix, bargain-basement way that they have made their speciality. However, in this case they came up against a brick wall of public hostility and they have now made not so much a U-turn as an ideological Catherine wheel in policy.

The statement does not represent a conversion, still less a blinding realisation of the folly of privatising an industry taken into public ownership 75 years ago by a Conservative Government. It is simply an act of political cravenness as ideology finally hits reality.

Privatisation would have devastated the land market in Britain as the country's largest landowner divested millions of acres. It would have meant selling a priceless asset of land and trees, nurtured over generations, for a fraction of its real value. It would have undermined and destabilised the long-term supply of timber to a vital national wood processing industry and it would have placed in jeopardy a long-term investment that has increased production sixfold since 1950 and is just about to produce a profit for the taxpayer.

Privatisation would have placed in doubt the protection of the rural environment and threatened very fragile rural economies. Undoubtedly, it would have closed off public access to millions of acres of the nation's land.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order to reply to a statement that has not been given?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) does not appear to be questioning the statement; he seems to be making his own as though something hypothetical might have taken place. I am not sure what he is questioning. Does he have the Secretary of State's statement?

Mr. Robertson: I welcome your curiosity, Madam Speaker, but I remind you and the House that, as the Secretary of State said in his statement, last year he asked officials to review the effectiveness of current incentives for forestry investment and options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands. The Government have spent £866,000 of your and my money, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order. In that case, the hon. Gentleman might question the Secretary of State about it.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Robertson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is interesting to note the defensiveness of Conservative Back Benchers over the key option that Ministers were clearly considering from day one and, perhaps, the reason why they have found it so difficult to defend it today.

It is small wonder that, having established all these arguments—which, Madam Speaker, we pointed out right from the beginning—even this fixated Government, as they have twisted and weaved and prevaricated towards today's statement, could not find a way of peddling full privatisation. Surely the Government are aware of how sad we should all be at the damage that has been done in the industry because of the long-drawn-out uncertainty about Government plans, which has seriously and needlessly affected investment and confidence.

May I ask the Secretary of State—[Hon. Members: "Hooray."] Clearly the juvenile tendency on the Government Benches comes out even more clearly towards the end of the Session. Why is it that, as the right hon. Gentleman makes his statement today, there is still no consultative document? After more than a year of deliberation, a statement to the House and the expenditure of £866,000 of taxpayers' money, there is still no consultative document. When will it be published, and how long will the consultation period be?

Is the Secretary of State aware that he will have a hard job convincing us that today's forestry halfway house is not just a devious staging post to eventual privatisation —a next steps agency whose next step will be to establish Forestry plc? Have Ministers still not learned the lessons of meddling and tampering with an industry that was rightly and logically placed in full public ownership in the national interest? Is not this obsessive drive towards commercialism undermining the long-term nature of the planning that is so critical to the forestry and timber industries? Will Ministers continue to demand further land sales, given that any new sales will eat into the core planting land of the Forestry Commission?

What does the Secretary of State intend to do about access agreements for sold-off land, which have been such a dismal failure in all previous land sales? What does his statement mean in terms of making access agreements bite, and last beyond the first sale? Do the Government really care about the 50 million visitors who use, enjoy and value forestry land each year, or will they be merely casualties, locked out of their own countryside in the drive to make short-term profits?

Other European countries such as Germany, Norway and Sweden regard common access to the countryside as a

[Mr. Robertson]

right. The only rights that the Government champion are those of the landed gentry. Cannot the Government get it into their head that forestry is not a short-term profit industry but an industry which, by its very nature, requires long-term investment and careful management of resources?

What the country needs is a multi-purpose forestry strategy—based, of course, on sound financial objectives, but also on long-term environmental protection, conservation, jobs and public access to woodlands. Above all, after 75 years of the Forestry Commission's fine work in utilising and protecting a unique national resource, Britain needs a national forestry policy that is based not on the interests of quick-buck tree choppers and land salesmen but on a genuine British national interest.

Mr. Lang: I thank the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) for the warm welcome that he has given to the Government's proposals. The kindest thing that can be said about his response is that he must have written it before he heard my statement. The difference between us is that our conclusion about the future ownership of the forestry is based on reason and common sense, whereas his attitude is clearly driven by pure, undiluted dogma.

The hon. Gentleman asked why there was no consultative document. I am publishing more details of the grant today, which will be available in the Library; the consultation document itself should be available in two or three weeks, and will allow a consultation period of about three months.

As for commercialism undermining the future of the industry, the hon. Gentleman has got it categorically wrong. He seems to forget that the Forestry Commission was not taken into public ownership—as he put it—75 years ago, but was established by a Government to create a new commercial strength for this country in the growth of trees. If we lose sight of the important commercial aspects of forestry, the whole industry will be doomed. What we propose will lead to more planting, better cash flow and management and more benefits from the forestry industry.

The hon. Gentleman asked about access agreements. There will be a classification of woods before disposal; there will be a strong presumption against the sale of those with a higher level of access. Public rights of way, where they do not currently exist, will be included in access agreement arrangements, and local authorities will be encouraged to respond positively to the idea of entering into such agreements.

Their legal costs will be paid by the Forestry Commission; target times will be included for the completion of agreements; the consultation period will be extended from two to three months; and the Forestry Commission has prepared model access agreements which it will offer to local authorities. I am confident that, in those and a number of other ways, access agreements will be entered into more successfully. As for an access agreement lasting beyond the first sale, when a local authority is involved in such an agreement at the initial sale, that agreement will continue for subsequent sales.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman called for a multi-purpose forestry strategy. That is precisely what we set out in the document. The Government's multi-purpose forestry policy remains unchanged; we are simply ensuring that it will be delivered more effectively and efficiently for the benefit of taxpayers, while recognising the commercial, environmental and recreational interests of all those who seek to use and enjoy our forests.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the announcement of incentives to encourage tree planting will be very popular and, we hope, will increase the number of trees planted?

Although his announcement that the estate of the Forestry Commission will stay in public hands will undoubtedly be welcomed by the huge majority of people, does he accept that it is a disappointment to a small minority of us because we believe that it would have been possible to dispose of the forestry estate from public hands while maintaining existing environmental advantages and public access?

Finally, how much money does my right hon. Friend reckon could have been raised had he taken the alternative decision to privatise the Forestry Commission's estate?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his welcome for incentives for planting and for his acknowledgement that the announcement that Forestry Commission woodlands are to stay in public ownership will be widely welcomed. However, I acknowledge that he and a number of colleagues would have preferred them to be sold. I agree that there is no intrinsic reason for it and it does on the surface seem rather odd that any Government should be involved in the extensive ownership and planting of trees, but the fact is that we have to deal with the existing situation. Having reviewed the position, the Government concluded that the present structure and characteristics of the forest estate do not lend themselves easily to the privatisation process, and that access, environmental and recreational considerations argue in favour of the conclusion that I have reached.

My right hon. Friend asked what valuation might have been placed on the woodlands had they been sold. It is a hypothetical question, but it might have been in the region of £700 million or £800 million, and that is for assets valued in the Forestry Commission's accounts at around double that figure.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Does the Secretary of State accept that we at least welcome the Damascene conversion or U-turn by the Government? We hope only that it will be permanent and that there will be no permanent indecision about the long-term prospects for the Forestry Commission. On that score, will he tell us whether the £4 million of what we understand to be new money will include the sum allocated for the woodlands improvement grant, which we regard as extremely important in helping to ensure that woodlands are open to a wider cross-section of the public for their recreation and enjoyment?

The public will judge the proposals on their results. Madam Speaker, if you go down to the woods today, you will find a huge number of our fellow citizens enjoying the woodlands under the control of the Forestry Commission. If, in terms of the environment, the natural habitat, jobs, employment, economics and public access, there can be a permanent solution to the Forestry Commission's indecision and difficulties of the past few months, it will be to the benefit of all our fellow citizens.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman talks about a Damascene conversion, but the truth is that there has been no such thing. The Government have worked their way towards this conclusion, reviewing the options without prior commitment and without the dogmatic prejudice found so easily in the Labour party. There has been no U-turn; nor are we entering a period of permanent indecision.

On the contrary, now that we have resolved the issues and now that a statement has been made that covers the whole range of interests in the forestry industry, we can now look forward to a period of stability and restored confidence in the planting and processing sectors, which are so vital to future employment in rural areas where we can look forward to the continuing development of employment opportunities. Indeed, only today, I was pleased to see in the *Financial Times* the announcement of a £40 million hardboard factory to be built in south Wales with the creation of 200 jobs. That is the kind of benefit to which we can now look forward as a result of the stability that I have highlighted.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the £4 million of additional resources coming into the system. Some of the increased grant will be derived from reductions in other grants, which I also mentioned in my statement.

However, the £4 million coming in will be directed towards the buying out of leases in those woodland areas which the Forestry Commission leases, mainly in England. Some £2.6 million will go towards increased planting in the conifer section, which is spread around the United Kingdom, although the majority is in Scotland. The remaining £500,000 of the £4 million will go to the short rotational coppice-planting scheme in set-aside land.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the tax changes which we introduced in 1988 and the environmental concerns, some justified, some not so justified, have in recent years robbed the forestry industry of its momentum. May I congratulate him on showing the difference between conifers and hard wood in forestry? Although we need hardwoods for timber production to some extent and for environmental purposes, conifers will drive along forestry in this country. While I welcome the measures that he has introduced, will he keep the matter continually under review to ensure that we get this vital industry on the road again?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend, whose interest and knowledge of these matters is extensive. I can confirm that, of course, these matters are continually kept under review. I hope that the switch of emphasis which we have announced today and the extra resources will lead to substantial increases in planting.

My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that there has been a flatness in planting in recent years. Indeed, the target of 33,000 hectares has become increasingly meaningless unless the restocking component is taken into account. It is clearly a matter that we shall have to consider further. Our objective is to raise planting levels across the board, but especially in the conifer section.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What are the supposed advantages of the trading body being, to quote the statement, "at arm's length" from the commission?

Mr. Lang: The objective of setting up the trading body on a next steps agency basis is to create a commercial atmosphere and the kind of commercial disciplines which will lead to greater identification of objectives, inputs and outputs achieved. That is a matter of recognising the cost and benefit of the commercial, recreational and environmental components. Those are the matters to which some of the specific grants that I have announced today —there are four new grants in the package that I have announced today—are directed.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that within the boundaries of my constituency lies the royal forest of Dean? I am quite confident that the majority of citizens in the forest of Dean will warmly welcome, as I do, today's statement in which the Government recognise the true value of the forestry estate, not only for producing wood, but for recreation and preserving the environment.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that the local people in the forest of Dean very much cherish their freedom to roam at will throughout the forest? That uniqueness was recognised in 1981, when the forest was set aside from other forest woodland from which it was able to sell off standing timber. Nevertheless, the residents around Dymock woods and Chestnut woods will also welcome the announcement today. My right hon. Friend—

Madam Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members wish to put questions and I have other business to safeguard. This is not the time for making statements.

Mr. Marland *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Just a moment. If the hon. Gentleman has one direct question to put to the Secretary of State, I shall allow him to do so.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has been some frustration over enterprises undertaken by Forest Enterprise to raise money in the forest of Dean because it was not possible for Forest Enterprise to reinvest money which was raised locally? Will he say whether, in future, money raised locally will be spent locally?

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for my statement. I acknowledge the close interest and authority that he brings to his repeated references to the matter in his discussions with me. I am happy to reassure him about the future of the forest of Dean and also of the woodlands that he mentioned. Indeed, I think that the forest of Dean was included not only in the Forestry Act 1981, but in the Forestry Act 1967 and the Forestry (Transfer of Woods) Act 1923.

On the question of rewarding the activities of those involved in managing the woods and forests that my hon. Friend mentioned, one of the benefits of the increased transparency and clarification of the objectives, inputs and outputs which will be derived from the establishment of a next steps agency is that it will be possible to create incentives, to reward good performance and to focus resources in a way that gets the best benefit for the type of objectives that my hon. Friend identified.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): First, will the Secretary of State give special attention to the need to restore the balance between management grants and planting grants so that existing woodlands can be enhanced and the gap between farming and forestry can be bridged? Secondly, will he give a guarantee that the disposals programme will not continue after the end of the century?

Mr. Lang: The disposals programme will continue; it is part of a rationalisation process. It is inevitable that the Forestry Commission, which has more than 1 million hectares under its ownership and control, should wish both to dispose of and to acquire small parcels of land with a view to rationalising and more efficiently managing its estate. The disposals programme will continue.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the relationship between planting grants and management grants. I hope that he welcomes the grants that I have announced today, including the woodland improvement grant, which is one of the new grants, and the livestock exclusion premium grant, and the new pilot schemes to stimulate planting in priority target areas. That and the interrelationship between farming and forestry have been carefully considered and are reflected in the decisions I have announced today.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The Select Committee on the Environment, when preparing its report on forestry, expressed concern about the opportunity for set-aside money to be put into forestry. I am sure that my right hon. Friend's announcement today will be widely welcomed by farmers and by the general public who see sterile land being used for growing trees. That will be very welcome. Can my right hon. Friend say a word about what he expects to happen to the widely respected Forestry Commission education unit, which does so much to spread knowledge among our schoolchildren?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. On the education unit, I am asking the director-general to look at all aspects of the work carried out by the Forestry Authority with a view to improving the performance and efficiency of the organisation. That is not a component of my statement today which is focused primarily on Forest Enterprise, on grants and on improving access. I have no doubt that the same disciplined approach will be brought to bear on the Forestry Authority.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As the Secretary of State represents, as I do, a constituency that is dependent on forestry as the key industry, he will appreciate that much of my concern is about employment, both direct and indirect. In that context, will he clarify what he means by the phrase "at this stage" when he refers in his statement to Forestry Commission woodland staying in the public sector? The phrase seems to suggest that there will be future reviews and that this is a two-step rather than a one-step move towards privatisation.

Will the Forestry Commission headquarters remain in Edinburgh, given that 64 per cent. of Forestry Commission land is in Scotland? Who will appoint the chief executive of the next steps agency? Will the Secretary of State accept that rights of way are not the same as access to forestry? If there are to be serious negotiations about access, our local authorities must have adequate funding to ensure that access is available to the public.

Mr. Lang: I assure the hon. Lady that this is not a two-stage review; it is a one-stage review. The review has been extensive and comprehensive, and I hope that it will create an atmosphere of stability and confidence during which all aspects of the forestry industry will be able to plan for the long term.

I have no plans to contemplate the removal of the Forestry Commission headquarters from Edinburgh where they are effectively based. The chief executive of the next steps agency will be recruited by open competition, and ultimately the decision will be for Ministers, after careful scrutiny and assessment of all the applicants.

I share the hon. Lady's emphasis on the importance of maintaining employment in rural areas. I believe that my statement will lead to a considerable rise of confidence in the future of employment.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Will there still be an important place in the new arrangements for wildlife conservation and for education, which have been great successes of Forest Enterprise in places such as Wendover woods in my constituency, which are on the edge of large centres of population?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend on that; the importance of environmental matters is central to multi-purpose forestry. We have acknowledged that carefully in the conclusions which we have reached and which we have announced today.

There are some 400 sites of special scientific interest in Forestry Commission land covering some 60,000 hectares, and I anticipate that the various heritage and countryside bodies in all of the countries in the United Kingdom will be fully involved in work with the Forestry Commission and with the private sector to ensure that their interests are protected.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): If the Government insist on a disposal programme, will the Secretary of State accept that the most effective way to ensure public access is for the local communities—where they express an interest to take over a woodland—to be given first preference or option on any sale? What will the right hon. Gentleman do to enhance the role of community woodlands? What will he do about the potential for conflict of interest for employees of the Forestry Commission, or of any other public agency, when it comes to the disposal of woodlands? I am thinking about a case in my constituency about which I have written to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lang: I am aware of the case in the hon. Gentleman's constituency to which he referred, and I am happy to assure him that I have asked my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for forestry matters to furnish me with a full report on what is going on in that case.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about access and the importance of community woodlands. We have established a new pilot targeting scheme to focus resources and help on community woodlands in central Scotland and on the national forest in England. The community woodland supplement scheme will remain in force with a grant of £950 per hectare. It is a successful and popular scheme, and there have been some 500 applications for it.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): My right hon. Friend will be aware that his statement today will be well received in my constituency, where there is a high level of afforestation. The reference to the 10 per cent. increase in the incentive for planning and my right hon. Friend's comments on access will be particularly welcomed. Will he confirm that future access by the local community to community woodlands such as Pannanich in Ballater and Dunnottar woods in Stonehaven will be secured?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that general assurance, and I am grateful to him for his

welcome for the announcement, which will benefit forest areas in his constituency and elsewhere. We have an incentives package to encourage access, and we have a number of proposals to strengthen the local authority involvement in access agreements. The community woodland supplement, the special management grants and the new woodland improvement grant will all help to improve access so that the public may enjoy our forests.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): May I be the first from this side of the House to offer the general welcome which I believe the statement richly deserves? It was absolutely necessary that the statement came at this time to give those people who wish to plant advance notice of what is available.

May I also welcome the better incentives for commercial conifer plantings, as opposed to sums which up to now had gone to what were largely amenity plantings of broadleaf woodlands? What is the right hon. Gentleman's target area for forests in the United Kingdom? Will he also give an assurance that he will take into account the environmental factors which affect the headwaters of many rivers regarding acidification, and also places such as the Flo country?

Finally, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that—

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should ask one question each.

Mr. Lang: It is a pity, Madam Speaker, as I was enjoying the hon. Gentleman's welcome. I am grateful for that, and in particular for his welcome for the conifer incentive. I have forgotten the other question about which he asked me.

Acidification is an environmental consideration to which attention must be given, and not just by the Forestry Commission. Attention will continue to be given to it.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My constituents and others who value the amenities of Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Blackdowns will greatly welcome what my right hon. Friend has said about stability and access to forests and woodlands. They will also welcome the thrust of his statement about improving timber production and products in the United Kingdom.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that those of us who like and respect the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) feel that his response to the statement was well below par?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for what I said.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I congratulate the Secretary of State on explaining to the House that there is often a conflict between privatisation and the public interest. May I invite him to explain it to some of his colleagues in other areas of the Government? May I say how welcome the statement will be to my constituents in the Cannock Chase area, which serves a large neighbouring conurbation? Beyond the need to deliver some organisational change to colleagues who wanted privatisation, why was it necessary to disturb Forest Enterprise, which is known to be working well, and turn it into a next steps agency, which will make it more commercial and less accountable?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the success of Forest Enterprise—an initiative that has moved things substantially in the right direction. I pay tribute to the chairman of the Forestry Commission for initiating that development. We propose to build on that success and to create the greater transparency of cost and benefit that we would get from a next steps agency, which was being diffused under the umbrella of multi-purpose forestry. We are not abandoning that policy attitude, but within the concept of multi-purpose forestry it is important to identify and measure the relative costs and benefits of its different components.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): May I add my welcome for the encouragement that my right hon. Friend is giving, in hard cash terms, to conifer planting? Does he agree that the Scottish climate is ideally suited to rapid growth? Does he acknowledge that the statement is good for the timber industry as it will secure indigenous supplies? Does he also acknowledge that, in the long term, the deal is good for the economy as it will reduce import costs?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I am grateful for his welcome. Indeed, it has come to my notice that conifer trees grow about three times faster in some parts of western Scotland than they do in Scandinavia and that they are of better quality for the purposes of our wood processors.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I welcome the central point of the Secretary of State's statement about keeping the forest in public ownership, and I pay tribute to the part played by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), in achieving that.

Since the Secretary of State and I share representation of the Galloway forest, which is one of the largest in Scotland, can he assure me that the jobs and conditions of service of those people who work so hard on behalf of Forest Enterprise and the commission, at Straiton in my constituency and throughout the forest, will be safeguarded when the next steps agency is set up?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome, and I join him in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for forestry matters for his extremely wise and sensible advice as we developed the proposal.

On the future of employment in the forestry industry, with more and more trees reaching maturity, as we are approaching harvesting time, and with the increased planting activities that I envisage as a result of the better focused and increased grants, employment is likely to rise rather than fall.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by those of us in north Worcestershire who have a close attachment to the magnificent woodlands after which my constituency is named? He mentioned increased grants for broadleaf planting in his statement, but said that the grants would be subject to certain densities. Is there a case for, and will he consider, eliminating that condition for broadleaf grants in areas of outstanding natural beauty where high densities may not be appropriate?

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. While we are seeking higher densities of about 2,250 trees per hectare for broadleaf grants, a density of 1,100 trees per hectare may be acceptable for new native

[Mr. Lang]

woodlands in appropriate sites, or for small-scale planting of broadleaf trees where there is little potential for timber production—normally, as discrete woodlands of less than three hectares, or as components of predominantly coniferous planting schemes. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Can the Secretary of State give us a guarantee that, as a result of his announcement, the public will not lose access rights to any more forests in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: I have no doubt that the new access agreements that we have introduced today, and the rich diversity of measures that we are taking to encourage increased access to Forestry Commission and private sector woodland, will lead to considerably improved opportunities for access. I cannot, of course, give the hon. Gentleman any absolute and categorical guarantees, because the ultimate decisions are largely for the purchasers and for local authorities. Emphasising the role of local authorities and making their task so much easier will lead to many more productive access agreements being reached.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Friend instanced the millions of people who enjoy our woodlands. I wonder whether he has yet had time to consider how hundreds of thousands of those same people might become investors in forestry if the Treasury could be persuaded to put the rules affecting such investment on an equal footing with investment in other productive industries.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome and I note his suggestion, which is essentially a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, much more planting is taking place at the hands of the private sector than at the hands of the Forestry Commission, and hon. Members will recognise the good sense of that.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): May I ask a question that I have asked Ministers before about research establishments, particularly the one in my constituency in the Bush estate? The Secretary of State omitted to mention research establishments in his statement, which I support, with qualification. What is the future for research establishments? Must they wait on the public efficiency drive on all establishments which has been proposed by the Government?

Mr. Lang: I did not mention research establishments in my statement because it was not concerned with that aspect of the Forestry Commission, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will have taken note of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the Secretary of State do anything to safeguard consumers' interests in relation to two particular aspects of his statement? First, how will we know whether the freedom to roam is safeguarded and promoted? Secondly, with regard to forestry grants, the Secretary of State will know that the previous system was a disaster in terms of speculation. In the present system, planting has been flat. Is there not a case for giving power to an existing or new body to speak on behalf of the people to guarantee their freedom to roam and that the investment system is working in the public interest?

Mr. Lang: If by consumers the hon. Gentleman means visitors to our forests, we keep a record of the number of visitors to commission forests. At present, there are some 50 million visits a year. It would be relatively straightforward to continue to keep tabs on the progress of numbers. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to suggest the creation of a new body. I have not noticed any shortage of bodies willing to proclaim themselves the spokesman for environmental interests, ramblers, walkers, mountaineers and all those people who take an interest in our forests. They lack no opportunity to make their views heard.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): How incompatible are the access agreements involving private woodland owners with the deeply unpopular trespass provisions in criminal justice legislation? Where an access agreement is signed, will hikers, anglers and others be protected against the liberal employment of those deeply unpopular trespass provisions?

Mr. Lang: The provisions to which the hon. Gentleman refers are in the Criminal Justice Bill, and they are not essentially a matter for me. They are aimed not at those people who seek simply to enjoy the land, but at those who invade other people's land with objectives that are damaging to the interests of owners and other users of that land. That is a different matter.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): May I join the Secretary of State in congratulating the Forestry Commission and its staff on their excellent work, particularly in the past 10 to 15 years? Will he tell us, because he has not made it clear, who will give local authorities, if they are to be responsible for access and maintenance of access to forests that are sold into private ownership, the resources to carry out that task?

I am sorry to hear that the disposal programme is continuing. It seems like continuing privatisation by the back door. If it does continue, what will happen to forests such as those around Lochgoilhead in my constituency, which were gifted to the Forestry Commission by the old Glasgow corporation for the enjoyment of the people of Glasgow? I hardly think that the Government have any right to sell off those forests.

Mr. Lang: I assure the hon. Lady that, even if the present disposal programme continued at its present rate, it would take another 100 years before disposal of the commission's forest woodlands would be complete. A new classification system has been introduced to ensure that forests and woods that are most in demand for access are the least likely to be sold, so I envisage that the problem will largely dissipate as an issue.

Local authorities will be responsible not for carrying out maintenance but for considering whether to ask for an access agreement to be written into a sale. The commission will make it as easy as possible for them to do so by drawing up draft agreements, by allowing longer for consultation, by paying legal fees and by involving heritage bodies, such as Scottish Natural Heritage, in the consideration of such matters.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): May I press the Secretary of State on that very simple point? The Welsh Select Committee prepared a report last year, from which the Minister will see that numerous local authorities throughout Wales said that they wanted to enter into access agreements but could not afford to do so. Unless this core point is addressed, we are wasting time talking about public access. Who will appoint the chief executive?

Finally, I add my voice to that of others who have welcomed the broad thrust of the statement that forestry should remain in the public sector, but I am concerned about the words in it "at this stage".

Mr. Lang: I have already answered the question about the chief executive.

The main cost that a local authority will bear is the legal cost of drawing up an access agreement. I have indicated that the Forestry Commission will pay those costs.

Points of Order

4.22 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have not successive Speakers deprecated from the Chair reference to applications for private notice questions? Is it not a little bit much to be told quite clearly by the Prime Minister at Question Time that we did not get a statement on the important issues involved in the decision to appoint the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Mr. Santer, rather than the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. Dehaene, because we did not apply for private notice questions. Is this not a rather new doctrine? Supposing I were to put one in tomorrow— would I be lucky?

Madam Speaker: In answer to the last question, I think not. On the first question, it is not for me to interpret what the Prime Minister said. We all need to be clear about that. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman, as I will, will read the *Official Report* tomorrow to see whether his interpretation is correct.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am aware of your concern about access to the House for all people, including disabled people. I am also aware of your desire to inquire into any alleged abuse of the House. I just tried to book a small dining room for a party of disabled constituents at the end of November, only to find that no booking is free until next year.

I would not have been concerned about that, if I had not this morning received from a constituent a Team 1000 document, which says that, if one pays £1,000 to the Conservative party, one can dine in the House of Commons on a regular basis. This is a letter from the chairman of the Conservative party, with an accompanying note from the Prime Minister.

Last year, 1,399 bookings were made by Conservative Members and only 167 by Labour Members. During the summer recess, will you please inquire into what is happening, when people can pay £1,000 and buy access to here but my constituents cannot do so?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is telling me that he cannot book a dining room between now and next year. I think that he should refer the matter to the Catering Committee. I will do so myself, but it is also incumbent on the hon. Gentleman to do so.

Mr. Sheerman: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I give you the documentation, which advertises facilities—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman began his point of order by saying that no room was available for him to entertain constituents between now and next year, but that at the same time rooms are being advertised. There is obviously something wrong. I suggest that he refers the entire matter to the Chairman of the Catering Committee, who is responsible, and I shall do so myself. Therefore, there will be a two-pronged effect, and a very effective two-pronged effect at that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On another matter, Madam Speaker, which involves the integrity of the House of Commons. You will recall ruling

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

last week that the rules of the House would be upheld. Have you seen the list of Members to be appointed to the Privileges Committee? Have you noticed—

Madam Speaker: Order. There is nothing disorderly about that. We shall reach that subject later tonight, and the hon. Gentleman can make his views known then. It is not a matter to be dealt with now. It is on the Order Paper to be dealt with at the appropriate time.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): With reference to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), would it be possible to consider the wider issue and the way in which the House of Commons is increasingly being used purely and simply for commercial purposes? Apart from being used by the Conservative party, the dining rooms are hired by hon. Members on behalf of various commercial organisations —in some cases hon. Members receive money, and in others they do not. Is it not undesirable for dining rooms of the House of Commons—the representative assembly of the British people—to be used sometimes for commercial purposes?

Madam Speaker: I am hoping that the reference that I promised to make to the Chairman of the Catering Committee—the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) will do likewise—will be looked into. That issue relates to the original point of order.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), Madam Speaker. Without going into specifics, could you give us guidance as to whether there are any circumstances in which it is in order for people to sell tickets for £1,000 or any other price to eat in the Houses of Parliament?

Madam Speaker: I want to see all the information before I am prepared to comment on that. I am sure that the hon. Member for Huddersfield will let my office have that information as soon as possible.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As for doing things properly, when approached by a lobby organisation to book one of the rooms downstairs that we use for afternoon teas and other things, is it in order for an hon. Member like me to do so on behalf of the trade unions and the workers at Rosyth? That is just what I have done within the past two weeks, and it seems to be a proper use of lobbying and Parliament. One should be careful before one makes charges against individual Conservative Members who believe that they are carrying out their parliamentary duties.

Madam Speaker: We cannot hold an inquiry on that matter now across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to press you on the matter, but can I ask you a direct question? Do you believe that there would be a conflict of interests on the Privileges Committee in the event of the motion being carried? The hon. Member for Shipley—

Madam Speaker: Order. I will not hear anything further from the hon. Gentleman. I ask him to resume his seat. We can discuss that matter later tonight as it is on the Order Paper. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman knows precisely our procedures; he may well take action this evening, but it is not for him to take action now, as we have not reached that stage on the Order Paper.

BILLS PRESENTED

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland)

Rev. Martin Smyth, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. James Molyneaux, Dr. Joe Hendron, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Rev. William McCrae, Mr. William Ross, Mr. Roy Beggs, and Mr. Clifford Forsythe, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Northern Ireland, discrimination against disabled persons on the grounds of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 154.]

Control of Car Boot Sales

Mr. William Cash, supported by Sir Michael Neubert, Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. John Whittingdale, Mr. Iain Duncan Smith, Mr. Bernard Jenkin, Mr. Christopher Gill, Mr. Douglas French, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. Richard Spring and Mr. Keith Mans, presented a Bill to regulate the holding of certain occasional sales; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

Environmental Claims

Mr. Alan Keen, supported by Mr. Andrew Robathan, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Cynog Dafis, and Mr. Jon Owen Jones, presented a Bill to prevent the making of false or unsupported environmental claims and similar claims relating to animal welfare in relation to goods or services; and for purposes connected with those matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 157.]

European Communities (Community Law)

4.28 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the European Communities Act 1972 so as to provide for the application of Community law within the United Kingdom to be supervised by Parliament.

The purpose of the Bill is to strengthen the role of Parliament in the implementation and interpretation of European Community law as it applies in the United Kingdom.

By our accession to the treaty of Rome in 1973, we made European Community law superior to our own law. European law consists of the treaties, all the decisions, directives and regulations, and the accumulated judgments of the European Court of Justice, comprising a developed system of law on its own, distinct from the laws of the member states.

When we first joined the EEC, it was left to the national authorities of each member state to decide how to implement a directive. That is still enshrined in article 189 of the treaty, but over the years the ECJ has developed the doctrine of direct effect, which means that a directive is now binding on the member states and on their citizens alike. At the same time, it creates rights which national courts are bound to uphold.

Moreover, the doctrine of the occupied field means that powers once gained by the Community cannot be withdrawn. The ECJ has demonstrated itself to be an interpretative and innovative court. In the context of our system of common law and statute law, we would say that it was a political court. In one ruling, the court accepted that it

"must not be defeated by obscurities or contradictions in the text, for the real meaning can be deduced from the context or the spirit of the text".

The leading textbook on EC law, Lasock and Bridge, describes how the court will fill in the gaps in the system and so update the text, acting

"not only as a Constitutional Court of the Community but also as an architect of European integration".

In a landmark case in 1978, the court ruled that

"a national court which is called upon . . . to apply provisions of Community Law is under a duty to give full effect to those provisions, if necessary refusing of its own motion to apply any conflicting provisions of national legislation, even is adopted subsequently, and it is not necessary for the court to request or await a prior setting aside of such provision by legislative or other constitutional means."

Recently, there have been a number of judgments in which the ECJ has more confidently asserted this principle, in a way that is wholly alien to our unwritten constitution. Furthermore, the doctrine of direct effect is leading even our own courts to develop the same methods of free and political interpretation, even overturning Acts of our Parliament. Many right hon. and hon. Members will remember the Factortame case in 1990, in which the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 was simply disallowed.

Over the past two years, the Government have suffered five defeats on various reinterpretations of the 1978 acquired rights directive—the last of them on the day before the European elections. This is wreaking havoc with the Government's competitive tendering and contracting out policies, which were previously regarded as perfectly reasonable and legal.

How is it that, although we are told that Parliament cannot bind its successors, we find that legislation passed by a Labour Government as a result of a directive to which they agreed now binds us to a succession of new and ever wider interpretations from which we cannot escape?

Until recently, such controversial decisions affecting policy would not have been touched by judges; the nature of these issues is clearly and obviously political. Typical of the free and loose way in which our laws are developed is what happens under article 119 of the treaty, which establishes the principle of equal pay for men and women. Pay is now widely interpreted to mean pensions, redundancy terms and other things, and goes far beyond the intention of this House when we first joined the Community.

On 3 March this year, in the Equal Opportunities case, our Law Lords effectively struck out aspects of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, on the basis that current differences in employment conditions between part-time and full-time workers are, in their judgment, indirectly discriminatory against women, because more women work part-time. Does this further innovation reflect the fact that one of our Law Lords is a former justice of the European Court?

There is also the continuing scandal of the huge financial settlements on pregnant former service women; it is set to cost the Government the price of a new frigate. What price "Front Line First"? Those who have fought and risked all for their country—and their widows—must wonder who decides such absurd priorities. Surely the politicians, not the judges, must decide.

This Bill does not purport to put a stop to all this, but should not this Parliament at least have a role in the process? The Bill proposes that the obligation to implement EC law should be transferred from our courts, which are making increasingly political judgments automatically, to the High Court of Parliament. That means that, where it is found that UK law is incompatible with EC law, the matter would be referred to the appropriate Secretary of State, who would then lay an Order before us, on which we could deliberate and vote.

That merely puts us on a par with our European Community partners. They all have written constitutions, which defend their national sovereignty. In France the Conseil d'État, and in Germany the Karlsruhe court—the supreme court of Germany—effectively set limits on the penetration of EC law into the system. Our Parliament is our supreme court. We are surely entitled to similar protection, the same as the others. After all, we want to be at the heart of Europe.

Governments have always been ready to reassure the House that such protections are unnecessary or alarmist. In 1975, during the referendum, we were assured:

"No important new policy can be decided in Brussels or anywhere else without the consent of a British Minister answerable to a British Government and British Parliament."

That has gone by the board. During the passage of the Maastricht Bill, the then Foreign Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), admitting that the ECJ has

"traditionally been a centralising institution,"

and went on to claim that he saw

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

"clear signs of a change of emphasis, and I believe that that trend will be reinforced by the Maastricht treaty."—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1058-60.]

That is what he said, but has it been borne out by events?

Lord Denning was right when he told us what was happening to our law back in 1974, when he described EC law as

"an incoming tide. It flows into estuaries and up the rivers. It cannot be held back."

As the 1996 renegotiation of Maastricht approaches, we are seeing a gradual evolution of Government policy. That needs to amount to a complete reappraisal—and, indeed, a new British consensus on Europe is forming, reflected not least in the sponsors whom I have gathered for the Bill. Only last week, the official Opposition declared themselves in favour of a Europe of nation states and against a federal Europe. Here is an opportunity to give a little legislative expression to these emerging aspirations.

Some may feel that it is gesture politics to introduce a Bill at this stage of the Session, and, of course, the procedure is perhaps just that, but I make no apology for giving the House an opportunity to set down a marker. If we are not prepared to stand up for the supremacy of our Parliament, we can be certain that no one else will bother.

I urge right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House merely to declare their belief in our powers and rights by supporting the Bill, for who else will defend them?

4.37 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): May I first start by agreeing with the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that we really should have a written constitution. I am glad that he is now on record as saying that it would make life so much easier if we had one. I welcome him and offer him free membership of the society that seeks precisely that.

On directives—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Colchester, North has quite finished—he is prone to mumble, and I have heard him do exactly that in European Standing Committee B—perhaps he might think for one moment about the directive that he originally mentioned. He was absolutely correct. A directive was, and still remains, a directive from the centre, and is fulfilled in the way that individual Governments see fit.

That was one reason why we made such a mess of the directive on knackers' yards, which were running perfectly well for a very long time, yet were ordered by the European Union to ensure that they were set up in a hygienic way. No sooner were Ministers and civil servants down to it than all sorts of regulations were put in place that were absolutely and totally unnecessary. The Commission confirmed that they were totally unnecessary.

Far too often, as with the hon. Member for Colchester, North, directives are over-zealously fulfilled. Therefore, the fault is in watching out on our own Executive. I agree with the hon. Member for Colchester, North about another genuine difficulty. It is that the Select Committee on European Legislation and Standing Committees A and B do not have the power that they should have properly to examine European legislation.

The hon. Member mentioned the acquired rights directive. I am convinced that we were right to warn the Government about what would happen. I remind the hon. Gentleman that article 119 is part of the treaty of Rome and was passed long before we decided to join. The then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), signed up to the treaty of Rome, with which I am in total agreement. The agreement does not give equal pay. If the hon. Gentleman had bothered to read it, he would see that it gives equal rights, which are crucial for women.

The hon. Gentleman failed to mention that, under article 119, the Government have been interfered with more than any other European Government. We have been taken to court more often than any other member country for offending against women's rights, and we have been found guilty every time.

I will not divide the House. *[Interruption.]* I would rather see the Bill go its little zig-zag way through the differing groups in the Government. We have the means properly to scrutinise European legislation, and we should do that. I look forward to watching the peregrinations of the hon. Member for Colchester, North as he goes about his business.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No.19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Bernard Jenkin, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. David Evans, Mr. David Congdon, Mr. David Faber, Mr. Nick Harvey, Mr. Peter Thurnham, Mr. Harold Elletson, Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva, Mr. Andrew Robathan and Mr. John Sykes.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (COMMUNITY LAW)

Mr. Jenkin accordingly presented a Bill to amend the European Communities Act 1972 so as to provide for the application of Community law within the United Kingdom to be supervised by Parliament: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 158.]

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Did you notice that, in his speech, the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) did not attempt in any way to dispute the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): No, I did not notice that, but I have noticed that that is not a point of order.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the House to be informed of the exact message on the envelope that was placed before the hon. Member—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a total abuse of the procedures of the House, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. He rose to put a point of order, but he knows full well that it was not a point of order.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to refer to another hon. Member's speech and say that that hon. Member said something which he clearly did not? In opposing the Bill, the hon. Member for Hemwsworth (Mr. Enright) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) had said that he wanted a written constitution. My hon. Friend made no such statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to speak against a ten-minute Bill and then not to shout "No"? If it is not in order—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) was in order. If he had not been, I would have ruled him out of order. The hon. Gentleman eventually said "No".

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am taking no more points of order. The House has important business to consider, and it is time that we got on with it.

Opposition Day

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY] [2ND PART]

Water Industry

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.44 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move,

That this House notes that since water privatisation in England and Wales, there has been a 48 per cent increase in domestic water disconnections, a 67 per cent increase in consumers' bills, a 125 per cent increase in water companies' profits, and a 133 per cent increase in the average pay of water company chairmen; believes that in providing a basic necessity such as water, essential to life and health, the needs of the consumer must come first; regrets that instead of this the privatised companies have put dividend growth and directors' benefits first; expresses alarm at the rise in domestic water charges, especially in areas such as the South West; insists that high standards of drinking water quality and sewage treatment must be achieved, but believes that the cost of this investment should not be placed almost entirely as a burden on current customers; deplores the manner in which the democratically expressed wishes of the Scottish people with regard to water are being overridden by Her Majesty's Government; calls for an immediate ban on domestic water disconnections and on the compulsory introduction of domestic water meters; and insists on the introduction of a tougher regulatory regime for water that puts the public first.

Early this morning, I went to the Library and looked up some of the debates on the Water Bill in 1988 and 1989. What a wonderful picture was painted at that time by the then Secretary of State for the Environment. On Second Reading on 7 December 1988, he said that all the Opposition scare stories about what would happen to water charges were completely unfounded and ridiculous. He said that there would be minor increases only as a result of privatisation, and that the shadow Secretary of State had been wide of the mark when he spoke about water charges doubling or trebling by the end of the century. Those who live in the area of South West Water have already seen their water and sewerage charges double, and we are not yet halfway since that time to the end of the century.

We were told that there would be wonderful access to the world's capital markets for money for investment and to clean up the environment. The world's capital markets are not funding the investment: it is being funded by the water companies' customers. In a remarkable little passage on Third Reading on 4 April 1989, Mr. Ridley said:

"The whole country knows that people work more effectively if there is every opportunity for them to better themselves by better performance."—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1989; Vol.150, c.91 .]

He was talking about the people who run the water companies. They have bettered themselves all right, but I doubt that it is better performance that has resulted in the departing chairman of Severn Trent Water getting a golden handshake of £500,000, or the former chief executive of North West Water getting £398,000 last November as a departing handshake. In the north-west region, two out of three bathing beaches are still illegally polluted with sewage. Privatisation has turned out to be a ghastly mistake.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): My hon. Friend spoke about Second and Third Readings of the Water Bill. I served on the Committee that examined the Bill. When we debated compulsory metering trials throughout the country—one was in my constituency—I said that that would be of no value to privatisation, that it would be costly and would inconvenience many constituents. That is exactly what happened: the meters are no longer in use. That is another example of incompetence, of spending taxpayers' money without thought as to the value. It shows how privatisation has failed the customers.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend, who played a distinguished role in the Standing Committee that considered the Bill, is absolutely correct. One of the points that he will have noticed in the motion before the House today is that we want to prohibit the introduction of compulsory metering into people's domestic water supply.

After all, water is not just another commodity that one might buy or sell in a supermarket; water is essential to life and health. Since privatisation, water charges have gone through the roof and many of our beaches remain polluted with sewage, yet company chairmen have awarded themselves massive salary increases while 240 families a week have their water supply disconnected.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman has referred on three occasions so far to what he calls dirty beaches. They obviously need to be cleared up. Where will the money come from? If it not raised through the water charges, will it come from taxes and if so, by how much?

Mr. Smith: I shall come to precisely that point in a moment. The hon. Gentleman has not been listening. It was his Secretary of State who said that the problem would be solved by access to the capital markets—that that would solve everything.

It is small wonder in those circumstances that it was recently said:

"Water privatisation is a rip-off, a steal, a plunder, legalised mugging, piracy, licensed theft, a diabolical liberty, a huge scam, a cheat, a snatch, a grab, a swindle".

Those are not the modest and moderate tones of an Opposition spokesperson, but Mr. Joe Rogaly writing in the *Financial Times* on 12 July.

In rather more measured tones, the National Consumer Council said:

"The performance record of many companies and of the water industry as a whole is lamentably poor, with many consumers facing rising prices and poorer services."

Let us look at precisely what has happened since privatisation. Water and sewerage charges have rocketed upwards, the average increase for England and Wales has been 67 per cent. since privatisation. That increase has been worse in some areas—in the north-west it was 75 per cent. and in the south-west it was 108 per cent. It cannot be right that single pensioners in the south-west of Britain are paying more than 9 per cent. of their entire income on water and sewerage charges.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I would have more sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's concern for the west country if his hon. Friends had not trooped through the Lobby to vote down a Bill that I introduced to bring relief.

The hon. Gentleman is moving inexorably towards saying that the EC directives should be implemented in full, without any negation on the time scale. Will he now answer the question that he was asked a few moments ago and say whether that is to be funded by increased water charges, by an increase in general taxation or both?

Mr. Smith: As I told the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), I shall come to that point in just a moment, but I would take the hon. Gentleman's intervention rather more kindly if the role that he and others played during the passage of the Water Bill had recognised what the Opposition warned time and again would be the adverse consequence of privatisation.

The water companies say that the water charges must rise because of the necessary investment in cleaning up the water supply. That might have been a believable argument had investment actually risen in line with the rise in the price increase, but it has not. Southern Water has had a 43 per cent. price increase but a zero increase in the level of capital investment.

Mr. Arnold: From what base?

Mr. Smith: The increases took place from 1989-90 to 1992-93, which are the latest available figures.

Welsh Water has had a 47 per cent. increase in price and a 1.1 per cent. increase in investment. Yorkshire Water has had a 33 per cent. increase in price and a 0.5 per cent. increase in investment.

Overall, capital expenditure in the water industry is now running at some £1.65 billion a year. That is more or less the same as the level of capital investment pre-privatisation. When the water companies tell us that those rises in charges have been due directly to improved investment, we should examine carefully what they are saying. How on earth can increased bills be justified if the investment is not being made?

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman; he has already had one chance to intervene.

At the same time, profits have soared. We are talking about a captive market. Each water company has a monopoly in its own area. We all have to pay, so they have a guaranteed income. It is a very low-risk business. On average, water companies in England and Wales have shown a 125 per cent. increase in pre-tax profits from 1989-90 to 1993-94. The water companies have an answer to that. They say that two thirds of the profit goes into capital investment. That may well be the case, but what about the other third?

When we examine the dividend growth of the water companies, the answer becomes very clear. As the National Consumer Council pointed out last week,

"Dividend payouts attributed to 31 appointed water businesses were about £300 million in 1989-90 . . . and £1,365 million in 1992-93. The growth of dividend payments"—

that is, gross dividends from core services—

"was 63 per cent. per year on average."

That is where the profits have gone.

If we ask the water companies, they will tell us openly and brazenly that dividend growth is their No. 1 priority, and that it is their paramount duty because they put it in the prospectus when they floated the companies for privatisation.

The Opposition believe that the customer, not dividend growth, should be the No. 1 priority, because all customers pay for the water and sewerage services we receive.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Money that should be paying for improved water and sewerage services is going instead into dividend growth. If we want to know why, we have simply to look at the share option schemes that are available to the directors, chief executives and chairmen of the water companies.

Then we have the point about the access to capital markets. There has been a modest increase in the borrowing levels of water companies over the past four or five years, but, as the National Consumer Council points out,

"borrowings have been relatively modest, and no significant capital was raised through equity issues (though one of the key reasons for privatisation was that the companies would be free to raise money in the markets)."

I have to say to both the hon. Gentlemen who have intervened so far that the answer to their question about where the funds for long-term investment—which will last for 40 or 50 years—will come from is precisely where the Government said it would when they put the Bill through the House—from a long-term borrowing strategy on part of the water companies, so that today's consumers do not have to bear the entire burden of 50 years' worth of investment all at once.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I assume that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the leader of the Labour party —the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) —who said in *The Times* on 21 June that she would be in favour of taking water companies back into public ownership. Clearly, that would have a cost attached to it in purchasing the equity stock. Has the hon. Gentleman made any assessment of what that cost would be?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is misquoting my right hon. Friend. She said that the water companies should be brought back within public control. That is something that I and the Labour party wholeheartedly endorse.

Mr. Bates *rose—*

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again, because he has in his hand what I suspect to be a Conservative party briefing note, not a copy of *The Times*.

Mr. Bates: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt the debate, but I seek your guidance. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) clearly said that I had misquoted the right hon. Member for Derby, South. I would never do that. I want to put the exact quotation on the record. May I have the opportunity to do that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Smith: Even at this distance, I can tell the difference between a copy of *The Times* and an A4 sheet of briefing paper from Conservative central office.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) say earlier that he would not give way again to the hon. Gentleman, who is clearly wasting his time trying to intervene.

Mr. Smith: I am conscious that time is short, and I know that a number of hon. Members want to speak.

One great claim advanced time and again during privatisation was that the great advantage would be access to borrowing, capital markets and equity funding. That has not happened. There are low levels of borrowing, there have been no requests for equity from the markets, and there have been higher and higher charges for the customer.

We were told that the water companies would invest in non-core activities—they would roam the globe, seeking opportunities for investment, purchase and enterprise. Perhaps we could be told why no less than £727 million has had to be written off because of a variety of mishaps and losses among the non-core subsidiaries and associates of the 10 principal water companies.

We need to examine the levels of disconnection. After privatisation, the number initially rocketed. In most areas of the country, they have since edged downwards, but in some—such as the Thames Water area—they are still rising strongly. Perhaps it was no accident that Thames Water donated £50,000 to the Conservative party in advance of the last general election.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): There is a curious inconsistency in the legislation governing water disconnections. There will be no disconnections in Scotland, because the Government introduced a last-minute amendment to that effect in the Committee stage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. Scottish Ministers said in Committee, "There will be no disconnections in Scotland; the water authorities in Scotland do not need disconnection as a power to recover debt." However, each time we press the responsible Ministers for England and Wales to adopt the same approach, they say, "The water companies must have disconnection as a power of last resort." One part of the Government says one thing and another part says the opposite.

The Opposition believe that water disconnection has no place in a civilised society. It cannot be right to cut off the means of life and health simply to recover a debt. A Labour Government will ensure that disconnection of domestic water is prohibited.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned Scotland, I shall refer to the Strathclyde referendum. What could be clearer than the result of that? Some 97 per cent. of people said that they had no time for the Government's proposals for the semi-privatisation of Scottish Water. However, the views of those 97 per cent. were utterly ignored by the Government. Once again, they have ridden roughshod over the wishes of the Scottish people.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I fully endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said about the Strathclyde referendum. However, is there not some contradiction in the Labour party's approach? It supports publicly owned and controlled water north of the border, yet the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has said that he is prepared to accept privately owned water south of the border.

Mr. Smith: I would take what the hon. Gentleman said more kindly if he had fought anywhere near so well and so

[Mr. Smith]

effectively on the future of water in Scotland as did my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent Scottish seats. We are committed to ensuring full and proper public control of water and sewerage services throughout Britain. In England and Wales, the quickest, most effective and most practical way to achieve that would be to improve and toughen the regulatory regime.

Compulsory water metering has been mentioned. Anglian Water has already introduced, by compulsion, water meters in parts of its patch. By doing so, it is ignoring the severe impact of that on large families and people with disabilities. Metering takes no account of human need, it rations by price, and it produces precious little environmental benefit. A Labour Government will prohibit compulsory metering in people's homes.

I want to concentrate for a moment on what has happened to the salaries and share options of the chairmen and chief executives of the water companies. The chairman of North West Water last year received a salary of £338,000. That is a sixfold increase since privatisation. Is the service provided by North-West Water six times better because of the chairman's remuneration? Of course it is not.

The briefing prepared by Thames Water in advance of the debate notes that its chairman receives a salary of £250,000—modest by comparison with the chairman of North-West Water. The briefing note explains:

"A recent Daily Telegraph survey concluded that he was in fact underpaid, considering the responsibility he holds."

I ask the Minister to consider the responsibility held by a signalman working for Railtrack and to compare and contrast the standards applied in that situation with those that apply to the chairmen and chief executives of water companies.

In most of the water companies, there are poor levels of general service, the handling of complaints is inadequate and it is us, the poor old consumers, who are picking up the price tag. Privatisation has been a mess. What we need is better and tougher regulation. The public interest should come first—on charges, investment, water clean-up, directors' remuneration, what happens to dividends, disconnections and metering policy. There is no sign of the Government rising to that important challenge.

5.9 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the water industry in England and Wales on its achievements since privatisation and commends the proposals for restructuring in Scotland which will facilitate the use of private finance; notes the improvements which have been made in environmental standards in particular with regard to the quality of rivers and bathing waters, and the consistently high quality of drinking water; notes that the industry in England and Wales is pressing ahead with a £3 billion a year investment programme which will result in further improvements to the upgrading of water and sewerage systems without placing undue burdens on consumers; and further notes that the privatised industry is successfully using its expertise to gain major contracts overseas, something which could not have been achieved under the policies of the last Labour government.'.

I apologise for the fact that I have a stinking cold and therefore may not be so intelligible as I normally am.

My hon. Friends and I were astonished by the remarkable speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I heard more ill-informed twaddle, if I am being charitable—or more misleading distortions, if I am not—than I would have believed possible. What the hon. Gentleman said flies in the face of reality, as I shall show; it was typical of a party and a spokesman who know that they can say what the devil they like because they do not expect ever to be in a position to deliver their promises—and for once, I am not talking about the Liberals.

The motion refers first to water disconnections, which have fallen from some 18,600 in 1992-93 to 12,400 in 1993-94. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that before a disconnection can take place an exhaustive legal process involving considerable time and effort must be completed. I was fascinated to learn that he intends to do away with disconnections, as they have been legal in England and Wales since 1945 and the legislation allowing them was introduced by a Labour Government.

There is no evidence from the Department of Health of any health problems related to disconnections. My local water company carried out a survey in connection with a Bill—a ten-minute Bill, I believe—presented by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). The vast majority of customers who were asked for their views on disconnections wanted the ability to disconnect to be retained, because they did not believe any more than we do that genuine payers should subsidise non-payers.

Let us get the facts clear: the number of disconnections is falling; the power to disconnect has existed since 1945, when it was introduced by a Labour Government; there is no evidence of health problems resulting from disconnections; and, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury knows, a lengthy legal process is necessary before any action can be taken.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I have here an article from *The Guardian* of 17 June this year about a British Medical Association report on water disconnections. According to the headline, water firms are "risking health with cut-offs". That is the professional view.

Mr. Atkins: I am sorry to disagree with the hon. Gentleman, but I must take the advice of the Department of Health, the Chief Medical Officer and others associated with them. They tell me that there is no evidence of health problems resulting from disconnections. Personally, I would rather accept their view than that of the BMA.

The next issue raised in the motion is the increase in consumers' bills. Of course that has happened, but why? The real reason is a failure to invest over many years—typically, in the period of the last Labour Government. I remind the House that between 1976 and 1979 a Labour Government cut investment by a third and sewage treatment by 50 per cent., while overall capital expenditure was cut by nearly 50 per cent. When I stood for Parliament for the first time in 1979, the industrial towns of the north-west were experiencing problems: ancient sewers were collapsing because a Labour Government had not invested the amount necessary to ensure that they remained in good order.

Mr. Chris Smith: Why, then, was investment lower in the five years after the Conservative Government took over than in the last year of the Labour Government?

Mr. Atkins: We privatised the industry precisely because we recognised that the taxpayer could not go on bearing the burden imposed by a Labour Government's failure to spend money which any Government clearly found difficult to spend. That proves my point decisively; I rest my case.

The increases in consumers' bills were generated by the need to spend substantial sums in a variety of ways relating to directives that we must—and do—observe, together with the new infrastructure that has been introduced throughout England and Wales. Notwithstanding consumers' understandable criticisms of price increases—which, as I have said, have been caused by a lack of investment and capital expenditure—our prices are still among the lowest in Europe.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): Will the Minister comment on the absurd inequities of basing water charges on long outdated historical rateable values? Only today, I received a letter from a Mrs. Woolford, who writes:

"I enclose copies of the water rates for 3 first floor flats all within 50 yards of each other, all of which rightly are in band A for the council tax.

Each flat has 1 bath, 1 toilet, 1 wash basin"—

yet the water charges differ widely. That is daft; what does the Minister suggest should be done about it?

Mr. Atkins: That is one reason why metering is being considered, along with other alternatives such as council tax banding. I shall deal with the point shortly.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I am conscious of the time. An intervention by the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) on the ten-minute Bill has limited this Opposition day somewhat. I should like to make some progress; if I give way to everyone, I shall not have the opportunity to reply to the comments of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and to allow hon. Members on both sides of the House to speak.

Next, the motion mentions water companies' profits. Of course their profits are up, and so they should be: without those profits no investment would take place, and some two thirds are being reinvested. Last year—the most recent for which figures have been announced—my local company, North West Water, provided a dividend of £86 million, but invested £424 million in new projects. Shareholders are entitled to a return on their investment, to attract them to invest so that the necessary infrastructure improvements can be made.

The motion refers to directors' pay. It is not for me as a Minister—or, indeed, for the Government—to intervene in private sector salaries, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear—and I agree—that company directors throughout industry should appreciate public concern about the amounts that they pay themselves. Nevertheless, whatever view we may express, shareholders—whether institutional or individual—have the power to intervene, and they should use that power if necessary.

Let us put the matter in perspective. In most cases such as those raised by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, the total salary package of directors is about one fifth of 1 per cent. of turnover, and sometimes much less. Is this really all that the Labour party can talk about, in the context of the vast sums being spent on the water industry?

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I certainly will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has already delayed our proceedings. I suspect that in this I may have the support of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, but perhaps not.

The motion refers to the need for high standards of drinking water and sewage treatment. Of course we agree with that. Some 98.7 per cent. of our drinking water is of a very high standard. It is arguably the best in Europe, and possibly in the world.

The other day, the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) was reported in one of the more lurid tabloids as having referred to tap water that was "substandard or even dangerous", in spite of the fact that 98.7 per cent. of our water is of a very high standard. Her comments are scaremongering of the worst kind. If there are any problems of water pollution, they are referred to the drinking water inspectorate and prosecutions are brought if necessary. There is a legally binding requirement on operators to make improvements in such cases. The incidents to which the hon. Member for Bristol, South made great play did not merit such treatment.

As for the drinking water directive—

Mr. Salmond *rose*—

Mr. Atkins: No, I shall not give way.

As for the drinking water directive, the United Kingdom has made clear to the Commission the changes that we believe should be made. We believe that a revised directive should be based on sound scientific and medical advice such as that in the World Health Organisation's recent guidelines and that standards should strike a proper balance between benefits to the consumer and the likely costs of achieving them. We also believe that the directive should accord fully with the principle of subsidiarity but, until revisions are agreed, the United Kingdom will comply fully with the provisions of the existing directive.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Under the revised guidelines, will properties such as colour, which do not matter—if one lives on peaty soil, there will be a slight coloration in the water but it makes no difference to people's health—count in any test?

Mr. Atkins: There is clearly some concern among consumers about the colour of water and, generally speaking, water companies prefer water to be clear and bright. However, I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend because peaty water in whisky adds a little flavour which might not otherwise be there.

The motion deals next with sewage treatment, of which the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury made great play. Over the years, Governments of all political persuasions believed that coastal tides were sufficient to disperse sewage from outfalls without it being necessary to treat it. The advice now from health and scientific organisations is that that is no longer acceptable. We understand that—

Mr. Enright: Some of us knew that a long time ago.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but Governments of any party believed otherwise for many decades. Labour was told that the original view was unacceptable when it was in office. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the bathing water directive was promulgated in 1976, but what did the Labour Government do about it? Absolutely nothing.

Mr. Nicholls: They washed their hands of it.

Mr. Atkins: Indeed, they washed their hands of it, as my hon. Friend says.

The Opposition persists in their campaigns to knock the state of British beaches and do untold damage to our tourist industry in the process. They are only too ready to trumpet failures to meet the necessary standards—often marginal failures—but when improvements are made, we hear nothing from them.

Last year, about 80 per cent. of our bathing waters exceeded the mandatory coliform standards set down in the bathing water directive. In 1987, only 56 per cent. did so. The water industry and the Government are firmly committed to completing our programme as quickly as possible, but the improvement schemes have to be paid for.

The Government and the water companies have faced the difficulties and we are acting on them. As I said, vast sums of money are being spent. In the north-west—in Liverpool and Fleetwood—about £500,000-plus is being spent to ensure that pollution on the Merseyside and Fylde coasts is a thing of the past by the end of next year.

We have also taken a great deal of trouble over river quality. About 90 per cent. of rivers in England and Wales and 95 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole are already classified as being of good or fair quality compared with an average of 75 per cent. for rivers of comparable quality in the European Community. I might add that our monitoring and record keeping is among the best and most publicly available in Europe.

We are continuing to make significant progress in improving inland and coastal water quality. The National Rivers Authority—a much respected organisation—has recently reported a net improvement of almost 11 per cent. in river quality in England and Wales between 1990 and 1992.

In addition to the improvements that will result from obligations under EC and domestic legislation, we announced only recently—on 6 July—that between 1995 and 2000, £522.3 million of spending is to aimed specifically at achieving further improvements in river quality. Those improvements will be the result of tighter discharge consents for sewerage works and will be incorporated in the new statutory water quality objectives as they are introduced. The most cost-effective use of expenditure will be determined by the NRA in consultation with water and sewerage companies. That will allow a number of high-priority schemes to go ahead, which would not otherwise have been the case.

The Labour party must make up its mind—does it want bills kept down at the expense of clean beaches or rivers, or the reverse? It cannot have it both ways without even greater expense to the consumer and the taxpayer. A balance has to be struck, and we, the NRA, Ofwat and the water companies are doing just that.

We meet, or we will meet by the end of next year, the EC directives. Other countries—notably France, Germany, Spain and Portugal—recognise, for example, that the high cost of implementing the urban waste water directive must be spread over more years than is proposed at the moment.

I will deal with the south-west for a moment, because I know that it is of interest to many of my colleagues who raise their concerns with me whenever they have the opportunity to do so. The Government are striving to ensure that a proper balance is struck between the desire for environmental improvements and the costs associated with them. South West Water alone—

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): The Minister is talking to himself.

Mr. Atkins: That is something that I do quite often.

In the 1990s, South West alone is investing about £900 million on improvements to the arrangements at seaside towns for the collection of sewage and the provision of sewage treatment. The programme, known as "Clean Sweep", consists of 33 individual schemes and will result in cleaner bathing and other coastal waters throughout the south-west.

In view of price pressures, it is reasonable that any waste water improvement schemes should not be undertaken any earlier than is cost-effective, provided that they are completed by the legal deadlines. In determining future price limits, the Director-General of Water Services will be considering the most cost-effective way for South West Water to meet its legal obligations, including those set out in the urban waste water treatment directive.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of the link between investment and the cost to the consumer, and although I welcome the steps being taken to restrict the rate of price increases in water and sewerage charges, will he tell us what action is currently being taken to deal with the costs that 3 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom —the people of Devon and Cornwall—are obliged to pay for about one third of the country's investment as a whole? When will the Government acknowledge that action is required to deal with the current situation even though we welcome measures to deal with a future situation?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who understandably feels very strongly about this and has spoken to me about it many times, as he has to the Secretary of State and, indeed, the Prime Minister. Clearly, the problems in the south-west are endemic in the sense that the south-west has a substantial number of beaches and a smaller number of people who can afford to meet the cost of improvements required under EC directives while we endeavour to keep costs at an acceptable level.

If my hon. Friend is fair—I know him to be so—he will accept that we have spent a great deal of time and effort on, for example, river improvements. Where the NRA advised that it was unnecessary to spend excessive amounts of money to alleviate the problems of my hon. Friend's constituents, we took that advice. I assure him that I, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister will continue to look for every legitimate way in which we can assist his constituents who are paying bills which, for all sorts of reasons, they are called upon to pay.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my hon. Friend be saying something in his speech or will the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), say something in the winding-up speech about the considerable

efforts that the Government have made in putting our representations to the Office of Water Services to reduce water charges after they had virtually tripled? Has my hon. Friend detected the same degree of enthusiasm in the South West water authority to co-operate and to ensure that water charges are kept to an absolute minimum as he has detected among his colleagues on the Back Benches?

Mr. Atkins: As usual, my hon. Friend makes a fair point. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has taken note of that and certainly intends to address it in his winding-up speech. There are concerns in the south-west and we understand that fact, as does the regulator, who appreciates that the matter needs addressing. It is his responsibility and task to do so. My hon. Friend knows that, at the end of next week the regulator will be announcing the new price figures. My hon. Friend will therefore have to wait until then.

The Government and the director-general are determined to ensure that the rapid price increases which we have seen in recent years should not be repeated over the next five years. Those large increases were unavoidable, as I said earlier, but they must be a thing of past. The director-general—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members keep suggesting that somehow I am not telling the truth. The fact remains that the investment that has had to be made is a direct result of the Labour party's inaction, inefficiency and incompetence. We know that. That is what people are having to bear in the south-west as much as anywhere else.

Mr. William O'Brien: May I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that, only a few months ago, he was in charge of water services in Northern Ireland? At that time, there was no problem of capital investment, no massive salaries were being paid to chairmen because the Minister was in charge of water services. There was no regulator, no massive increase of charges and the industry, as the Minister knows, was in public control. How does he justify the fact that, when he was in charge in Northern Ireland, there was none of what we are hearing today? I have listened carefully to the Minister. Will he explain why Northern Ireland enjoys those benefits without the regulator, without massive increases in chairmen's salaries, and without the dividends, while the rest of the United Kingdom is having problems?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I think that the Minister has got the question. The only problem is that it does not seem relevant to the motion, which is about England and Wales. I shall leave it to the Minister to judge.

Mr. Atkins: I shall not be drawn into a debate about Northern Ireland—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?] simply because this is not the place to do so. I shall not be drawn except to say that, before I left that fascinating and enjoyable part of the United Kingdom, one of the problems on my ministerial desk was that we were going to have to spend about £500,000,000 to improve water quality in Northern Ireland. That money would have to be found from the taxpayers of Northern Ireland. One of the matters that we had to consider was how that would be done. One of the options would have been privatisation, as the hon. Gentleman knows full well.

I shall conclude my remarks in relation to the director-general who, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), is nearing the completion of his first periodic review of water price limits. Hon. Members will want to know that the outcome will be announced on 28 July, when the director-general will tell us the new annual price limits for each company for the 10-year period beginning on 1 April 1995. He has already said that he hopes that, nationally, it may be possible to limit overall price increases on average to between 0 and 2 per cent. above the rate of inflation. That will supersede the current average ceiling of 4 per cent. above the rate of inflation.

Before I leave the south-west, it would be invidious of me not to mention our friends the Liberal Democrats. God bless them. What would we do without them? The Liberal Democrats say one thing here and another thing there. They say one thing on one doorstep and another on the very next doorstep. I shall refer to the Liberal Democrat candidates who stood at the Euro-elections down in the south-west.

Their manifesto, which they called "Unlocking Britain's Potential", contained a pledge to provide

"national and European help with the unfair burden of local investment needed to clean up Britain's beaches".

What European funding? I would like to know, as I suspect the House would, what European funding they think will be available. How much national support do they expect to be able to find? Will it come from other parts of the country? Is it something on which the Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), has been consulted? Would he have any views about the cost implications of that? Who will pay? Will he be happy that his constituents in the north of England have to subsidise those in the west country?

Where exactly do the Liberal Democrats stand on those issues? They say:

"Liberal Democrats are determined to have clean beaches and lower bills."

We want to hear from them how that can be done. It is no good saying all sorts of things on the doorstep which they cannot justify here, where such things ought to be justified. That is why the Liberal Democrats are all things to all men, women, children, animals and tabloids and why, when it comes to general elections, the vast majority of the public know that they count for very little.

That is enough of the Liberal Democrats. What, then, of the future? I have said that price rises must be contained. Most of the work has been done to catch up with the investment which needed to happen as a result of the Labour Government's incompetence. The directives to which I referred, must continue to be implemented, but over a reasonable time scale and on the basis of the best contemporary and technical health advice. All methods of charging must be considered. Is metering fair, bearing in mind that electricity and gas consumers are used to metering. Perhaps that is too long-term an answer.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is the Minister aware that, on Monday, the local residents association in Crosby in my constituency presented a 11,000-signature petition against compulsory water metering? Does not the Minister think that water metering ought to be an option for consumers rather than a compulsion in all houses? Does he not think that the whole issue of pricing centres around the high price of water since

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

privatisation, rather than that of metering? The option of linking price to council tax bands is a fairer way than compulsory metering.

Mr. Atkins: The argument with which we are faced is what are the various options by which charges may be levied for water. That discussion probably crosses the House because some hon. Members believe that metering is the answer, some believe that council tax banding is an answer, some believe that ratable values extended to 2005 are the answer.

Mr. Morley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) clearly does not. All those issues must be examined. Indeed, I have asked the individual authorities, the Water Services Association and others to look at the matter and to give me some advice on what they believe is best. Whatever that advice is, a balance must be struck between the cost to the consumer and the need for environmental improvement. That is just what the Government, Ofwat the National Rivers Authority, water companies and others are doing.

I ought to draw to the attention of the House one point to which I did not notice any reference in the speech of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury—the worldwide recognition of what has been achieved in Britain by our water companies and what they have achieved abroad in export orders. For example, North West Water has obtained a contract for £1.5 billion to upgrade, extend and operate the sewerage system throughout Malaysia, a £285 million contract to operate water and waste systems in Mexico City. [*Laughter.*] Opposition Members are laughing about the fact that British industry has been successful in obtaining major contracts abroad and they do not consider it to be important.

Mr. Enright *rose—*

Mr. Atkins: I am not giving way. I shall continue telling the House and the country what has been achieved by North West Water, for example. It has obtained another two contracts for treatment plants in Sydney and Melbourne, valued at £75 million with an estimated revenue of £400 million.

Thames Water, the company which looks after the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, has a contract to supply Ismit in Turkey with a water supply scheme worth £450 million. It has a 45 per cent. stake in a consortium developing a £344 million waste water infrastructure in Mexico. Severn Trent, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, has a £240 million contract for Mexico City and a 20-year concession to upgrade and operate sewerage facilities in New York state. So the achievements of British companies abroad, creating income for this country and protecting jobs goes on.

Since I became the Minister at the beginning of the year, a number of politicians from all parts of the world have come here to find out what the Department and the British Government are doing in relation to water and I shall give the House an indication of who. We have had politicians, at local and national level, from Israel, the Ukraine— *[Interruption.]* The Opposition do not like the facts. The fact is that we have a worldwide reputation on water and that people come here to find out what has been achieved. People have come from Israel, the Ukraine, Oman, Brazil, Australia, Greece and Portugal. They want to know what has been achieved and to learn about our successes. What about Labour?

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I will not give way any more because I am conscious of the time.

What about Labour? Labour cannot make up its mind what to do with this success story. Labour has produced a document called "In Trust for Tomorrow". The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury reckons that 680,000 jobs will come of that. But who will pay? The document suggests an environmental court in which losing plaintiffs will have their costs paid by the taxpayer.

Mr. Chris Smith *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman specifies in his document that there will be free charges. The document suggests greater regulation and more controls. Who pays? Has anyone checked with the shadow Treasury team? This is not "in trust for tomorrow"—like so much of the Labour party's policy, it is in hock for tomorrow.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have looked closely at the motion and the amendment and I see that they both refer specifically to Scotland. The Minister proposes to conclude his speech without making any mention of the Scottish dimension to this issue. Is it in order for him so cavalierly to ignore the Scottish dimension to this issue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not responsible for the Minister's speech. The Minister is still making his speech—

Mr. Enright: I bet you are glad of that; yours is much better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) is making many sedentary comments, most of which are not very helpful—although I accept the last one.

Mr. Atkins: I have a question for the Labour party. Will it renationalise water? We have heard from the acting leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who said on 21 June 1994:

"There is one area . . . where we might be looking for some new form of public control, and that is water".

The leader-elect, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), said of the major utilities, such as water, on 6 July:

"We believe that the great utilities must be treated as public services and should be owned by the public."

Then we have the Labour party commission on the environment document which says:

"We will ensure that the actions of all private water companies are under public control."

Yet on the wireless this morning, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that he would not renationalise, but that he was in favour of more regulation. That is simply a cop-out under pressure. What does it mean? Do his comments mean more intervention in company operations? Do they mean more regulation than is the case now? We have the most regulated water industry in Europe. Would he direct resources to one area

at the expense of another or would he subsidise consumers' bills? Who will pay? Has the hon. Gentleman cleared his comments with the shadow Treasury team?

The fact is, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury knows, as we know and as the House knows, more Labour regulation equals more Labour interference, and that means more cost to the company, the customer and the taxpayer. Prices are now steadying as environmental improvements continue. That is the right balance, and that is why I urge my hon. Friends to support the Government's amendment and to oppose the misleading nonsense from the Opposition.

5.42 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I would not be letting out too many secrets if I said that, at the moment, the water industry in general and Severn Trent Water in particular are not the most popular institutions in the midlands. Why should they be? Last week, after careful examination of the company's accounts, we learned, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, that John Bellak, the former chair of Severn Trent, got a pay-off last year of £500,000. His salary had already gone up from £51,000 a year just before privatisation to £179,000 a year in the last year in which he was there.

Mr. Bellak has also done rather well in other ways. He, like many directors and chief executives of water companies, had been subject to share option deals. In the year ending March 1993, he exercised 107,572 share options at an option price of £2.62 per share. At the close of trading on 22 February 1994, the market price for Severn Trent shares was £5.83 per share. To work out the benefit of those share options, we would need to know whether the shares bought under the option were then sold and at what price. That is not absolutely clear at the moment because Mr. Bellak has not said anything about it. However, an article in the *Observer* suggested:

"company chairman John Bellak made £226,000, pre-tax, on the sale of 100,000 shares"

from his share option dealings. He did not do too badly, did he?

When there was a public outcry over the £500,000 pay-off to John Bellak, the cry that came back from the water companies, which may be echoed by Ministers, was, "Well, it was in his contract." We must ask, of course, who negotiated that contract in the first place. Although Ministers may now say that it is nothing to do with them and that they rather disapprove of these big pay increases, they are not exactly neutral in terms of how people like John Bellak came to be running the water industry. They appointed those people in the first place.

It is interesting that in 1987, when Mr. Bellak was chair of Severn Trent, the then Conservative Member of Parliament for Cannock and Burntwood said:

"Is my hon. Friend aware that the chairman, Mr. John Bellak, is both diligent and competent—indeed, one might describe him as a good bloke—and that under his leadership, the Severn-Trent water authority looks forward immensely to being in the vanguard of privatisation?"—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 921.]

One would look forward to privatisation if one was going to make so much out of it. Mr. Bellak is also a prominent Conservative party supporter, and twice stood as a Conservative candidate in general elections.

It does not go like that for all the staff of the water companies. The staff at Severn Trent face reorganisation. Some will do all right out of it, but the protections that they have enjoyed for many years will be swept away by the privatised water company. It seems that there are standards for the people who actually do the work which are different from the standards for those who run the privatised water companies. Yet the response of the water companies when these things are criticised is that somehow they have been misunderstood. I do not think that we misunderstand them. The people who misunderstand them are the Government.

The Conservative party has not always taken its present view of the water industry. Back in the 19th century, it was significant that Conservatives such as Joseph Chamberlain, again from the midlands, were prominent in setting up a proper, municipally run water industry. Arguably the best contribution to public health in that century was the establishment of clean, wholesome supplies of water under municipal control. No doubt, if a Conservative suggested that today, he would be regarded as a dangerous pinko. However, that was the view taken all those years ago.

Now, of course, we are in an era of privatisation. Now we are in an era when the salaries of the top executives shoot through the roof. We are in an era when profits have gone up by 117 per cent. since privatisation and when dividends went up by 63 per cent. on average between 1989-90 and 1992-93. For consumers, it has obviously been a very different story. Prices have gone up on average by 68 per cent. in the Severn Trent area.

The water companies say that they are misunderstood and that they are putting all the money into investment. It is true that there has been an increase in investment in the Severn Trent area. However, I ask Ministers to consider what happened, before privatisation, when a Conservative Government were in power. Prices were ruthlessly pushed up through the roof while investment was driven down by cash limits and controls on borrowing the like of which had not been seen in the water industry. Ministers have some explaining to do on that one.

The fact is that privatisation was sold as a way to boost investment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, the Government said that the water companies would have access to the money market and that they would have access to investment. They said that the companies could extend their share issue. We have not seen much of that since privatisation. Certainly there have been some increases in borrowing in the past two or three years, but in terms of the scale of their operations, water companies have a very low gearing. As for extra share issues, we have hardly seen them at all. About 69 per cent. of that investment is being financed directly by consumers through their water bills.

The Government said that they wanted water companies to operate in the private sector. I do not know of any other private body which knows that it can jack up prices by such an amount and still be sure of a captive market. Of course, that is the case with water because it is a natural monopoly. The consumer has no choice but to use water when it is needed and if they can afford to.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burden: I will not give way, as other hon. Members want to speak.

We have seen the growth of water poverty. Pensioners and people on low incomes now have to choose between essentials, and must decide whether they can afford to have

[Mr. Burden]

a bath if they have a water meter. They must choose between paying the water bill or cutting back on essentials elsewhere. There is evidence that that is going on. Ministers may close their eyes to that, but evidence has come from local authorities, the National Consumer Council and from anti-poverty organisations. If they looked, they would see that that is the truth.

Nobody in the late 20th century should be put in the position of not being able to afford something as vital to health as a wholesome supply of water. Some water companies have a solution to the problem. Severn Trent has a great wheeze which they call a prepayment water meter. It is a bit like a coin-operated gas or electricity meter, only the water meter does not accept coins. A person buys a card which he or she charges up with a certain amount of time, and that is put into the water meter. That provides the person with a supply of water for a specific length of time.

The problem, of course, comes if the person is not able to charge up the card. What happens then is that the person runs out of water and he or she is effectively cut off. When Ministers say that they are pleased that the disconnection rate has gone down, we must remind them that it has gone down following the period after privatisation in which the rate actually went up. Are they including the question of disconnection by prepayment water meters in their disconnection figures, and if not, why not?

In the Birmingham area, Severn Trent has embarked on a trial with prepayment water meters. The trial has already led to a phenomenal rate of self-disconnection. It is arguable that prepayment meters are unlawful under sections 60 to 63 of the Water Industry Act 1991. Are the Government doing anything about that? Are they investigating the matter? The answer simply is no.

We need a new deal for our water service, and we certainly need new methods of charging. I do not want to see—as apparently Ofwat does—the introduction of compulsory water metering. That would discriminate against families on low incomes, the disabled and families with children. We should be moving towards a system of payment according to the council tax which can be related to the ability to pay. We must end the scandal of water disconnections and also the scandal of prepayment meters and self-disconnection. We need a regulator which stands up for the interests of the consumer. That has not been the case with Ofwat, and it is about time that that was changed. We need changes which benefit the system and which recognise the true cost of water bills, because that has not happened in recent years. But most of all, we need a change in attitude in the water industry.

As privatisation came along, the language of the industry changed. Suddenly, we did not have consumers —we had customers, as if there were somehow a choice about whether one paid or not. We did not have a public service—we had a business. Water is a public service. There is no more vital element than water.

If one does not have access to a wholesome supply of water, it is obvious to everyone—apart, it seems, from the Minister—that there will be health risks. That is why we need to get back—I shall say it—to a democratic system of public control of the water industry. We need a system where water is treated as a public service and consumers are not treated as mere commodities, because that is the situation that we have at the present time.

5.56 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): Opposition Members never cease to amaze me, and tonight they have amazed me more than ever before in the way that they have tried to turn the genuine success story of the British water industry into a failure. Sometimes they simply use blatantly misleading facts, and the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was guilty of that.

Their other tactic is to do down the work that the men and women of the water industry have done to turn it around and to make it such a success. By unjustifiably attacking the industry, as they have in the debate, they are rubbishing the ordinary men and women who have put so much over the years into building up the business into a great success.

The hon. Gentleman represents a London seat, and he was rude about Thames Water. The hon. Gentleman is a neighbour of his hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Does the hon. Gentleman keep his eyes closed when he walks around the city? Has he not seen the big holes in the ground with Mr. Joe Murphy's name on a sign above them and people digging them? Does he not realise that the London ring main is one of the biggest capital schemes in London for many years? Speaking from my own experience of the service I get when I have to use Thames Water's customer services, it is vastly better than it was before privatisation.

One of the remarks which the hon. Gentleman made which absolutely staggered me was that water companies are now collectively spending very much the same as they did pre-privatisation. That is clearly wrong. We know that they will be spending £30 billion before the end of the decade.

A research paper from the Library makes it clear that the hon. Gentleman does not understand that expended capital by the water industry does not include operating expenditure incurred as a result of compliance costs. If one improves bathing water and river water, one must put in some capital. But the vast majority of money goes on the day-to-day costs of running a plant to a much higher standard than it was run before. Clearly if one tipped sewage out in the sea untreated, and then tipped it into the sea treated, one would spend more money on a day-to-day basis than before. That is why those annual running costs must be put on to customers' bills—that is the only way.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about a success story, I suggest that he goes to the north-east of England where the success of Northumbria Water and North East Water has been evident to everyone. My constituency has the distinction of having the largest man-made lake in Europe, the Kielder reservoir. Incidentally, that scheme was invested in before privatisation, and will prove its worth in the future.

An interesting point which my hon. Friend the Minister made related to what would happen if a scheme of unifying water charges—as the Liberal Democrats suggest—was introduced, and a national contribution was made to the problems of the south-west. The ratepayers and water consumers of Northumberland who invested many years

ago in capacity would then find their bills going up to pay for an area which did not invest at that time. That would be highly unfair.

The Kielder dam provides guaranteed water supplies to customers and industrial consumers in the north-east of England. One of the area's latest arrivals from abroad, the Fujitsu factory, has moved to the north-east simply because Northumbria Water could guarantee a regular supply. When the factory at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham starts to operate fully, it will use the daily equivalent of water to that used by a town of 100,000 people. The company went to the north-east because Northumbria Water could guarantee a regular supply come droughts. We never have hosepipe bans because we invested in our infrastructure. Northumbria Water is a regular spender of capital—it has spent about £35 million this year on improving drinking water. The water quality in a rural area that often has difficult supply problems is above the national average. The company spent £155 million on new sewers and £275 million on new treatment works.

A rash of new sewage treatment works has opened up in the north-east. The local water companies seem keen to invite local Members of Parliament to open them. I cannot see the connection. We have not seen the hon. Member for Sedgefield for some time. One of the reasons might be that he opened a sewage works in his constituency recently. I had the pleasure of opening a £3 million scheme last Saturday in Haltwhistle in my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), who is not present at the moment, also opened a £13 million scheme. Northumbria Water is setting a standard and the pace for good service, good quality and profitable operations.

We have another water company in the north-east—North East Water, which is another success story. Its annual meeting took place today. We learnt an interesting fact about disconnections from that meeting today. We have heard much about disconnections tonight, but disconnections in the Northumbria Water and North West Water areas have decreased since privatisation. Last year North East Water, which covers a large part of Tyneside and Wearside where there are problems with poverty, did not disconnect one household. It has reduced its disconnections to nil this year, for which its customers should be grateful.

Even that company believes, however, that sanctions should be available against the "Can pay, won't pay" customer. Those are the people on whom disconnections are targeted, not those people who cannot pay because of difficulties. Water companies bend over backwards to help those who need help, which is why North East Water ended up with no disconnections. If the companies do not have that sanction it will be a tax on other consumers who pay their bills.

I realise that time is short so finally, in support of all those who work in the British water industry, I say "Well done." As a Northumbria Water consumer, and as someone who enjoys clean beaches and rivers, the 50p a day that I spend is money well spent. The River Tyne in my constituency is now the best salmon river in the country. Several years ago it was dead and nothing lived in it. Investment in clean beaches, clean rivers and a proper service system have shown that privatisation is an enormous success.

6.2 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): We are constantly told by the Government of the benefits of privatisation, but it is difficult to see that any benefits have arisen from the privatisation of the water industry. There is no competition in the industry, prices have risen dramatically, service is often poor, company profits have soared and, as other hon. Members have said, top salaries and share options are now at an indecent level.

At the time of privatisation, the Government claimed that water companies needed to be set free to raise capital in the marketplace. We were told that, by privatising the water companies, they would become more efficient. As a consequence, more money would be available to revitalise our water and sewerage system and the newly privatised water industry would be able to provide good and reasonably priced service, while dealing with the very real environmental concerns. In addition to those promises, we were told that average price increases would be no more than 5 per cent. above the inflation rate each year.

We await with interest the results of the Office of Water Services report that is due to come out shortly. It is the first chance to consider comprehensively the consequences of the Government's policy on water. We will see the way in which the consumer has borne the brunt of the effects of those policies, while private water companies have benefited substantially.

The public are paying for successive Governments' lack of investment in, and neglect of, the water industry. I was intrigued to hear the Minister say that the problems were all down to Labour Governments. The Conservatives have been in power for twice as long as Labour since the war. It was a wonder that he did not put it all down to the 11 months of the Lib-Lab pact. *[Interruption.]* I thought that the more rational Conservative Members would grab at that.

The truth of the matter is that the policy has been a disaster. The consequences have been disastrous for the consumer, the environment and the tourist industry. Coming from a constituency where surfing and recreation in the sea waters are essential to our economic prospects, I say so with genuine concern.

The National Consumer Council concluded in its recent report:

"consumers have paid too much towards the cost of investment in the industry and the companies have received the lion's share of the benefits of privatisation."

The NCC observed that domestic water bills have increased, on average, by 67 per cent. since privatisation. Customers are paying £2 billion more than they would have been if charges had kept in line with inflation.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to an article in the *Financial Times* and quoted Mr. Joe Rogaly, who had been writing about the industry. Mr. Rogaly also commented:

"Tory policies"

on water

"have made the poor worse off, in some cases absolutely as well as relatively. Making water high-cost for low income households is indecent."

Low-income households now spend more than 3 per cent. of their disposable income on water bills, compared with only 2 per cent. five years ago.

Other hon. Members have referred to the south-west, where local people are being forced to pay average water bills of more than £300—the highest in the country. Water

[Mr. Nick Harvey]

charges have doubled in the past five years and are set to double again. The south-west is an area with many people on low incomes and with the highest proportion of pensioners. Although the average bill is £300, many households are paying more than £600. A pensioner living alone in the South West Water area spends more than 9 per cent. of his or her income on water.

Frankly, local people simply cannot afford to pay those bills. Members of Parliament of all parties who represent the south-west have people writing to them and coming to their surgeries to make that point time and again.

Meanwhile, the water companies' profits have risen by more than 20 per cent. each year in the five years since privatisation and dividend payments to shareholders have increased by about 63 per cent. per year. Furthermore, the bills have often increased way beyond increases in operating costs. One can only conclude that the regulatory system has failed to safeguard the interests of consumers. The Government and the water companies seem to have forgotten their social obligation to provide a service to the British people at an affordable price.

The regulatory system has compounded the problems that consumers face. While Ofwat has limited powers, the Government have repeatedly said that tackling rising bills and water quality is in the hands of the regulator. The Director-General of Water Services made it clear that he considers that his hands are tied and his ability to act is restricted.

The Government need to act on water bills, but all we hear from them are short-term solutions. As the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) said in an earlier intervention, it is all very well coming up with a few schemes that will reduce the rate at which water bills increase during the next few years, but water bills in the south-west are already unacceptably high. We want some sign from the Government of how they are going to reduce those bills, not how bills that are already high will be increased, albeit at a slower pace.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East was right. It is ludicrous for 3 per cent. of the population to pay for the clean-up of 30 per cent. of the nation's designated beaches. Before privatisation, the cost of cleaning up would have been spread around the country. At the point of privatisation, the Government recognised the justice of that when they gave South West Water a green dowry. It was not enough, but it was an acceptance of the principle that taxpayers in other parts of the country should contribute towards the cost of the clean-up in the south-west.

The Minister made the ridiculous claim that we were saying different things in different parts of the country and summoned as evidence, not a local leaflet issued by the candidates to whom he was referring, but the party's national manifesto. That was the very same document that had been published and distributed throughout the country so that everyone, including not only my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), but all his constituents could decide for themselves. We have made clear how we think the costs should met. Earlier, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said how the Labour party would meet them. We need to hear from the Government how they will pay for the clean up.

As the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has already predicted, if the Government continue with their policy of loading costs on to the householder, they will suffer electoral annihilation. They need to grasp that point now or the same trend that we saw in local, county, general and the recent European elections will return to haunt them again and again. The south-west will not tolerate the level of bills that it already faces, let alone any increase.

The Government's response has been to redesignate certain areas of water in the south-west, saying that they did not need the clean up that they were due to get. Some sensitive coastal waters are to be redefined as high-dispersal areas. In effect, that means that, in those areas, semi-treated sewage can be pumped out to sea. A couple of weeks ago, Ministers announced the slowdown of the clean-up of four beaches in the south-west. To my astonishment, some hon. Members greeted that information with delight. I even one heard one say on the radio that he did not know of any of his constituents who would put more than a toe in sea waters.

I tell hon. Members who hold that view that many people who use the sea in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) are noticing the state of the water and they will not be delighted by the news that the clean up is to be slowed down; nor will tourists and surfers who come from all over the country and who are increasingly discerning about where to spend their holidays. The savings that hon. Members believe might accrue to householders will be more than offset by the damage that will be done to tourism in the south-west and the fact that people will go elsewhere because they know that bathing waters there are safer.

The nation must pay for the clean up, which can be achieved by the means suggested by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls): getting the water companies in other parts of the country to pay some surplus of their profits. That is one way of paying for it, but it seems bizarre that the Conservatives should decide to privatise water companies, to put them into the marketplace and to allow them to try to achieve maximum profits for shareholders, and that they should then treat the industry as though it were still a nationalised industry and try to shift the profits from one area to other. It is, however, an option.

The second, and I think far better, option is to recognise that water bills are not a fair and just way of raising the money for the clean up, but that income tax is. That is why my party said in its manifesto, which we published throughout the country, that the costs should be borne by the taxpayer. Some parts of Europe are paying for the cost of their clean up by resort to European regional funds. It is false pride on Britain's part that is preventing Britain from drawing on the same source of funding.

I should like to raise the matter of how the unacceptably high level of bills is levied. A Labour Member said that the domestic rate valuations on which current water bills are based are ridiculously out of date. So, for the time being, it would be better to base them on council tax bands, which, although imperfect, have a benefits regime that helps people on low incomes and single-person households.

Our specific proposals are: the national taxpayer to help contribute to the costs; council tax banding to be used for computing bill levels; and a tougher regulatory regime. Only by implementing such proposals can the problems caused by privatisation be addressed. The Government must tackle the lack of price controls, protect the consumer and deal with the environmental challenge.

6.14 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The only thing that can be said in favour of the speech of the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) is that he bounced himself and let the cat of the bag. He called for increased taxation. Some people may not understand how, in a country where taxation levels are already plenty high enough, an hon. Member can make a plea for his constituents to be taxed more, but the hon. Gentleman told us how he reached that position.

The hon. Member for North Devon made a statement that was farcical, even for a member of the Liberal party. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman would contain himself, he might learn something. It was obvious from his speech that he had learned nothing in the past four years, so today might be the opportunity to do so. We also learned that the hon. Gentleman thinks that the problems caused by pollution are caused by privatisation. *[Interruption.]* If he obtains a copy of *Hansard* tomorrow and looks up the quote, he will find that he said that the problems of pollution were caused by privatisation. The reason why we are in this position and why we have the problems of pollution is that Conservative and Labour Governments, over many years, have not invested in the water industry.

It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to ask, "What have you been doing in the past 15 years?" A more honest question would be, "What has the country been doing in the past 100 years?" This country has not invested properly in cleaning up the nation's coasts. We must deal with that. The only way to do so is by spending money.

One then enters the argument over how to raise those funds and how to spend them. To say that privatisation causes the problem, however, is nonsense. It would sound good on the doorstep. The hon. Member for North Devon gives separate arguments at separate doorsteps. He would no doubt say at one house, "We would have to increase national taxation, but it would not apply to you." All hon. Members know that the accusation to be laid at the door of Liberal Members is not that they change their attitude from constituency to constituency, but that they change their lines from doorstep to doorstep.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: As a prime example of doorstep hopping, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. To present a policy that states that the deficiencies of the past 100 years are "all down to privatisation, guv" is nonsense.

Mr. Tyler: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a number of his colleagues, some of whom are present, have advanced the same solution as my hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey)? Is the hon. Gentleman saying to his hon. Friends that they are stepping out of line with party policy or that he is stepping out of line with the party, or are there different party policies for different constituencies in the south-west?

Mr. Nicholls: It is up to hon. Members to justify their position. I said that it was fundamentally dishonest to pretend that the problems that we are having to cope with in the country, and in the west country in particular, in some way stem from privatisation. I am particularly concerned about the position in the west country, which is unique. It is not the Government's fault that Brussels has designated that about 455 beaches in this country must be brought up to standard and that 30 per cent. of those beaches are in the west country.

There is a water charge payer base of about 1.5 million people, who, let it be said, are predominantly elderly. That means that about 650,000 people in the west country have to be responsible for cleaning up one third of the nation's beaches. That is not the fault of the Government or of the House of Commons. The problem arises when one has a system whereby standards can be imposed which have not been debated in the House but which come from Europe.

Mr. Hicks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Nicholls: I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) has views and enthusiasms about Europe which are probably shared by most Opposition Members, but not by most Conservative Members. The standards that we are having to meet were imposed on us by Europe. Any honest and realistic assessment of how we cope with the problem on behalf of our constituents stems from how we deal with that matter.

Mr. Hicks: Since I am invited to respond, I have to say that, speaking personally and for no one other than myself, I would have no objection if this country, as a member of the European Community, agreed collectively to enhance water quality standards and sewage disposal standards. Surely my hon. Friend would not disagree that, having taken that decision, the British Government could make whatever adjustments and modifications they desired to deal with the genuine problems that the hon. Gentleman and my constituents face in meeting the cost of essential capital investment. The funds are there.

Mr. Nicholls: To some extent, I can agree with my hon. Friend; but if conditions are imposed on us by Europe it is the Government's responsibility to do what they can to ameliorate their effects on us. The point that I am making to my hon. Friend, which is undeniable, is that the House did not set the standards or time scales, yet the Government have to cope with them.

Mr. Hicks: But we agreed them.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend may say that, but I do not believe, and I doubt whether any of my hon. Friends believes, that, if the House had set its own standards and time scales, we would be in this position. That is the essence of the problem.

We should be asking ourselves, and asking the Government, what has been done in the past four years to reduce the effect of charges. We heard something about that from the Minister of State and I suspect that we shall hear more about it from the Under-Secretary, but much effort has been made to ensure that, under doctrines such as subsidiarity, we get such decisions back within our own province and, as far as possible, try to set our own time scales.

No hon. Member is denying that beaches must be cleaned up. Nobody, with one or two exceptions, is suggesting that that can be done painlessly without it costing somebody money, but it is not sufficient to say that because the benefits are so marvellous we must proceed at breakneck pace. Whether we are spending money on water or any other worthwhile measure, we must try to ensure that we set a rate that people can afford, whether they are paying locally or nationally. It simply does not get

[Mr. Nicholls]

someone off the hook to say, "Put it on the national Exchequer, then it does not matter." We shall make progress only by going with the grain of what people think they can afford.

The second way to make progress is to convey to South West Water that it, too, has a social responsibility to people, not simply to say, "Look at the benefits, pay up and stop complaining," but to understand how grievously upset people feel. It is all very well to say that tourists from the north, where water charges are only 20p a day, and windsurfers benefit from such measures, but I must tell the hon. Member for North Devon that I am not particularly concerned about windsurfers from the north.

I am desperately concerned about an elderly population who face water charges that they can cannot afford. Ultimately, those whose prime method of transport may be a Zimmer frame do not need to be told by the hon. Gentleman— [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for North Devon obviously thinks that pensioners' problems are humorous, but it is nonsense to think that one can tell elderly or retired people in straitened circumstances that the answer to their problems is to go windsurfing.

Mr. Harvey: The hon. Gentleman represents a constituency that, like mine, is dependent on tourism. Is he seriously saying that he does not care about the water quality and conditions that surfers from the north will experience? I think that hoteliers and others in the tourism industry in his constituency will be appalled by his attitude.

Mr. Nicholls: Of course I am not saying that, and the hon. Gentleman knows that I am not doing so. I am saying that a balance must be struck between doing things that are good and desirable and doing them at a pace that can be afforded. To set out, for simple, cheap, populist reasons, one example where benefits would accrue to tourists and windsurfers and to ignore the fact that many other humble, quiet elderly people do not see the argument in quite the same way is dishonest.

As I said before being treated to a rehash of the hon. Gentleman's speech, South West Water must realise that it is not sufficient to say that charges are going up and that that is the end of it. I know the effort that Ministers have made in the past four years to convey a proper sense of urgency to South West Water about that.

Ultimately, what has been achieved? The hon. Member for North Devon said—I expect that he will deny it, but I wrote it down—that water charges were set to double again.

Mr. Harvey *indicated assent.*

Mr. Nicholls: He is saying it again. The hon. Gentleman knows—and, if he does not, the hon. Member for North Cornwall certainly does—that there is no question of water charges doubling again. We now know, as a result of efforts that have been made, that the increase in water charges next year should be in the band of inflation plus 2 per cent. That is not a scenario that promises the doubling of water charges in the foreseeable future. It is the efforts that Ministers and west country Members from Devon and Cornwall have made that have made the difference.

I referred to the European dimension. I remember asking an Italian Environment Minister some years ago, "Why are water standards imposed on Britain in a way that we know they are never imposed on the continent?" He said, "Because your political parties keep telling us in Europe how bad your beaches are, and if you keep going on about it ultimately we cannot turn a blind eye to it." I say from my experience in government and as a Back Bencher, imagine how much easier the job of Ministers would have been in trying to make progress in Europe if they had been able to say that Conservatives, Liberals, Labour and the rest—everyone in the west country across the political board—was behind Ministers' efforts to alleviate the problem.

We did not see that. We saw—especially from the Liberals, because in the west country the Labour party is merely a tedious irrelevance—that at every opportunity when Liberal Members could have combined with Conservative Members to achieve something, they did not want to know. The ultimate condemnation for the Liberal party when the history books finally come to be written will be that, faced with a choice between doing something to help people in the west country about water charges and merely exploiting the fact that the Government could not act quickly enough, exploitation won and their constituents missed out. That is the moral of this unhappy affair. The good point is that, at long last, the end of the misery is in sight.

6.26 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): This debate should have been called by the Government, not by the Opposition. It is scandalous that the Government thought that they could get away with announcing the five-year pricing review next week without making a statement to the House. It would have caused no problem to ask Mr. Byatt to bring the review forward a week or two so that a statement could have been made to the House and the subject discussed properly.

Last week, fortunately, the National Consumer Council issued a report, which I commend to hon. Members, that carefully considered the financial facts and figures of the water industry in the past five years. Its conclusions are quite mild, although it says that consumers have not had a fair deal over water prices. The statistics speak for themselves.

Two failures stand out since water was privatised in England and Wales five years ago, and both can be laid at the Government's door. First, the water companies have failed to understand their job. Their purpose is simply to offer an essential service to the public, who want plenty of clean water for daily needs and who want their waste and sewage to be disposed of safely.

They do not want their supplies to be measured drop by drop. They do not want to worry if their children go through a patch of bedwetting or if their elderly relatives become incontinent— problems that 1.5 million households experience every year. They know that there is a cost, and always has been, but they expect water to be affordable and easy to pay for, because it is one service that no household can do without.

The second failure is that no one— certainly not the watchdog or the regulator— looks after the consumer's interest. The companies have taken the Government at their word. The companies are now bigwigs in the market: they have capital assets of £150 billion. So what do they do?

First, they reward themselves. They are, after all, extremely big fish in the market, and they think that they deserve extremely big pay-offs and rewards—£500,000 is the going rate. Secondly, they look around—as the Minister was boasting—to see how they can become even bigger. They look at the water supply in Turkey, Israel and around the world, and become global companies. Thirdly, as the Government suggest in their deregulation legislation, the companies look to see what constraints are burdens. They look at the European regulations to see if they can appeal against them or take longer to comply with them.

Finally, the companies run pricing tests to see how much of the burden the consumer will bear. As we have heard, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) is dying to say, the tests have increased prices by more than 100 per cent. in the south-west. Price increases are running at an average of 67 per cent. To their delight, the companies find that consumers still buy their services, because they have no choice. Water is the ultimate monopoly.

Some households always find it hard to keep up and hard to pay, but the companies can disconnect them or put them on a stringent system of rationing and pre-payments. For the water companies, the world is their oyster. Who is there to prevent them enjoying the benefits?

People thought that, under privatisation, the person with that job would be the regulator, Ian Byatt, but the facts have shown them to be wrong. He has worked to protect the companies in the market, but failed to exercise any control on behalf of consumers.

Mr. Byatt advances the premise that I have heard this afternoon, that water price rises will be kept between 0 and 2 per cent. Does that mean exactly 0 and 2 per cent.? No, it means between 0 and 2 per cent. above inflation. The water regulator has never accepted that water prices should rise by a negative K value, decrease or be limited to inflation. As a result, profits and perks have soared and the regulator has done nothing.

Indeed, he still says that surplus profits are perfectly in order, because they offer companies an incentive to make efficiency savings. The surplus profits and payouts that have been made do not represent anything in the way of an incentive to make efficiency savings. The regulator does not believe in regulation.

He started with an open debate on the cost of quality, but as soon as criticisms were made by the National Rivers Authority about the figures given by the companies, he closed the debate. We now have a one-man show—Mr. Byatt alone will decide the price caps. There will be no appeal except to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The price review out next week has become a farce.

Even on consumer issues, where there is a consensus, the water regulator has failed to take action. When he has a regional chairman in Yorkshire who sticks up for consumers, Diana Scott, the water regulator sacks her. On no major issue has the water regulator backed consumer concern against the advice of water companies or the Government. That is no way to regulate our most crucial public asset.

We must sort the matter out for the public. The Government are clearly proposing to do nothing, but defend the system that we have. We must make proposals to resolve the problem. We can sort it out through the charging system. Are we paying for a commodity, such as jam or potatoes, where one pays for what one uses, or are we paying for an essential service, such as health or cleansing, where one pays for what one needs?

At present, we pay through water rates, but we must have a new system, because the present one is out of date. The council tax banding system has replaced the rating system. That banding system offers a flexible, ready-made and cheap-to-run new property-based system. This afternoon is the first time that I have heard a Minister even suggest that it may be in order to use the banding system in that way.

I am cheered by that suggestion, but I shall believe it if the Government will tomorrow back it up by saying clearly that new houses do not have to be compulsorily metered. I will believe it if the Government give housing corporations and any new householder the option of metering or negotiating the cost with the water company on the basis of the council tax band. If they do that, I shall believe that the Government are genuine in their efforts.

I am speaking quickly without going into each subject in detail, because I am aware of the time. There is a conservation argument, but the Government, and certainly the water companies and the public, must be aware that one quarter of all water supplied through the system is lost through leakage.

A far cheaper way of conserving water supplies than placing the burden unfairly on domestic householders through metering would be to address the problem of the 25 per cent. leakage rate and introduce a programme to install showers, sprinklers and dual-flush toilets. That would save the same amount of water at a quarter the cost of metering, and would provide the first step in bringing water under public control.

The first thing that the public want to control is what they pay for water and how they pay it. That is what I mean by bringing the water industry back into public control, but that is only a start. We shall achieve our aim only if we have a fundamental review of the regulatory system that puts the public—the consumer—first in the policy that deals with the world's major public need.

We need a system that delivers even-handed pricing across the country. Why should the south-west pay three times more than the rest of the country? We do not pay three times more in London for the health service if there is a flu epidemic—why should the south-west pay three times as much because the area has a longer coastline? It is nonsense.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Jackson: No, I cannot give way, because of the limited time available.

We need a system that opens up the decisions of the water companies to public view and puts an end to the gross pay-offs, dividends and rip-offs of the present system. We do not want the Government's present approach, which is to do nothing. We need action to be taken urgently. The public are making hon. Members aware of that urgency.

6.37 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I apologise to the Minister for not being present at the start of the debate, when I was unavoidably detained, although I did hear some of his speech.

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

There is genuine concern among hon. Members about the price of water. While many of us recognise the success of the water companies in winning contracts abroad, they have some responsibility to consumers at home. Of course we appreciate the improvements that have been made, many of which are visible. I always appreciate that those improvements have to be paid for, but more of the costs could come from some of the profits which could be reinvested.

There is nothing wrong in making profits, but it depends on what ultimately happens to them. I know of no other companies involved in producing goods that can expect such a profit on their goods or such a return for their shareholders. A Treasury Minister has had something to say about large dividends. Most companies do not enjoy large dividends, but perhaps water companies do.

Manufacturers in my part of the world cannot keep raising their prices, unlike the water companies. Sainsbury and Marks and Spencer would not pay more for their manufactured goods, because they know that they cannot pass on the price increases to their customers. Water is surely more essential than anything else.

I do not believe that compulsory metering is a good idea. It may be ideal for those who live alone, but it entails grave disadvantages for families.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose—*

Mrs. Peacock: No, I have only a few minutes.

We should look carefully at linking charges for water with council tax banding. That would be much fairer for most people. I am worried about very low-income families who find that they cannot pay their water bills—it is not a matter of "won't pay"; it is a case of "can't pay". If their water is cut off, according to the rules of this country, their accommodation becomes unfit for human habitation. Conservative Governments have spent many years providing much better accommodation for families, so that they can all enjoy these facilities. I do not want to turn the clock back to the last century.

I am sure that the Minister will point out that disconnections are falling. They have certainly fallen in Yorkshire in the past year or so, partly as a result of pressure brought to bear in Parliament, and partly as a result of people's own efforts. It is not possible, however, to disconnect water supplies in Scotland and Northern Ireland. I should like the Minister to tell us why we are different. If the system works there with no ultimate sanction, why cannot it work in England too?

It is true to say, as Yorkshire Water says, that most families pay up and have their water reconnected within 48 hours. Of course: but many people who cannot pay find the money to pay by going to loan sharks. Then their families end up in greater debt, so that they can have their water reconnected. Perhaps the Minister will say that this is someone else's responsibility, and that some other agency should help to provide the cash—but that is not what happens.

We must be extremely cautious. Water is essential to life. No one can go anywhere else for water—there is no competition. It is not as if we can leave Sainsbury and go down the street to Marks and Spencer. Water has to be piped to people's homes; the water companies have a captive audience. We should all try to help the water companies to provide the sort of service that we would like all the families in our areas to enjoy, and at a reasonable cost that continues to be affordable.

6.42 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I welcome the opportunity to speak tonight, because, if there is one issue that is important to the south-west, it is the price of water. I am surprised to note that only one Conservative Member from the south-west has been in the Chamber for most of the debate. I should have expected the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) to stand up and apologise on behalf of his colleagues who, in 1989, voted for the water privatisation legislation which has caused the high prices in the south-west—

Mr. Allason *rose—*

Mr. Jamieson: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I thought that Conservative Members would come here this evening and explain why their flagship policy has caused such high prices in my region.

It has been said tonight that water prices have risen around the country, but in the past five years they have doubled in the south-west—and for those who are least able to afford such rises.

Mr. Nicholls *rose—*

Mr. Jamieson: The National Consumer Council has clearly stated that the very poorest people in the south-west are spending 12.9 per cent. of their total incomes—or £1 in every £8—on water. We heard not a word about that from Tory Members today.

I can tell Conservative Members why we need clean beaches in the south-west. We need them for the people who live there; we need them for the tourist industry. We need investment in our area so that we can bring in the tourists. The hon. Member for Teignbridge totally failed to explain the fact that under the privatisation system cross-subsidies have gone. That is why he and his colleagues, by voting to privatise water, inflicted high water prices on the people in the south-west.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It had better be a point of order.

Mr. Arnold: Is it in order for an hon. Member to impugn the motives of other hon. Members who were here during this debate—such as my hon. Friends the Members for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) and for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is certainly not a point of order.

Mr. Jamieson: I am sorry that time has been wasted by a bogus point of order.

The people of the south-west have been betrayed by the Conservatives. The hon. Member for Teignbridge talked about the tedious irrelevance of the Labour party in the south-west—

Mr. Nicholls *rose—*

Mr. Jamieson: Not another bogus point of order, I hope.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a convention of the House that, if an hon. Member refers to another by name, he gives way to him? Were the hon. Gentleman to give way to me, I would have the chance to ask him to explain why he voted against my Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The summer season seems to be well upon us.

Mr. Jamieson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman speaking about water at all tonight; he is usually associated with a stronger drink than that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman withdrew that remark immediately.

Mr. Jamieson: I do withdraw it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to sharing—

Mr. Nicholls *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) has resumed his seat. Mr. George Howarth.

6.45 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): This has been a useful debate. As the Government are not prepared to discuss their water policies in the House of Commons, the Opposition have chosen our last half Supply day—in the event, somewhat less than half a day—to debate the subject of water.

I should like to begin by commenting on the Minister's opening speech—*[Interruption.]*—if he is willing to listen, that is. I do not think that he was listening even to his own speech half the time. The Minister offered robust support for privatisation and the activities of the water companies, as we might expect. Obviously, he was a member of the governing party, and probably voted for privatisation, in 1989. That being so, he would have to say what he said today.

I have been doing a little research, however, into the other reasons why Conservative Members might support the activities of the water companies. Might it have something to do with the fact that 23 directors of water companies are also directors of companies that donate directly to the Tory party? The Minister stoutly defended Thames Water, and maligned the motives of those who attack that company. Is it possible that the £50,000 that Thames Water gave the Conservative party in 1992, just before the election, had something to do with the strength of support that Conservative Members offered the company today?

I also wonder whether Mr. John Murray Thompson, a director of Thames Water—

Mr. Atkins: Never heard of him.

Mr. Howarth: Well, the hon. Gentleman ought to have. He is also a director of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, which was responsible for donating £70,000 to the Tory party in 1992. The Minister went on stoutly to defend the activities of North West Water. I agree with him that it provides a good service for our constituents—some of its activities are good—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) accuses me of being down in the gutter. Even if I got down there, that would still leave me several feet higher than him.

But let us say a word or two about North West Water and its chairman, Sir Desmond Pitcher. I wonder whether the support of the hon. Gentleman and the Tory party has something to do with the fact that, between 1979 and 1992, Sir Desmond Pitcher, when he was chairman of Littlewoods, donated £160,000 to the Tory party finances. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members say, "So what?" I shall tell them. Sir Desmond Pitcher is now getting his richly deserved—from the Tory point of view—reward, with an annual salary of £263,000, bonuses of £75,000 and, no doubt, enormous benefits from his preferential share deals. The list goes on. But the facts mean that we cannot take the Minister's defence of the water companies and their privatisation terribly seriously.

What benefits have consumers had from privatisation? Is the Minister willing, for example, to defend the fact that disconnections have increased by 48 per cent. since privatisation? The Minister defended it by saying that they came in in 1945. Let me tell him that they have increased dramatically, as has the cost to the consumer, and for the very reason that many of those people simply cannot afford to pay their water bills. Is he defending the fact that bills have gone up by 67 per cent? "Well," he says, "that is because we have had to invest all this money in all these improvements that we have been going to carry out." What happened to the promise given at privatisation that all the money for those improvements would be borrowed on the commercial markets? That has not happened at all. The consumers have had to pay for them.

Is the Minister defending, for example, the fact that profits are up by 125 per cent.? Is he willing to defend the fact that, in the same period, the salaries of water company chairmen have gone up by 133 per cent.? No, I do not think so. The truth is that the capital projects, which are good and necessary, have been paid for not by the water companies, but by the consumers. They have not been paid for by commercial borrowing. The money has had to be raised through the consumers.

We are given the impression by the Minister that the consumers are getting a marvellous deal. How much have they paid through charges for all those improvements? The amount was £2.7 billion. Yet, during the same period, dividends, or payments for shareholders, increased by 63 per cent.—a cumulative payment of £2.9 billion. That is more than even the consumers have been expected to pay to fund the improvements. Share values have increased by 99 per cent. since 1990. During the same period, in general, share values on the FT index have gone up by only 39 per cent.

The people who have been hit worst by privatisation are those in our community with the least income. Before privatisation, the average person living on benefit was expected to pay 2.5 per cent. of his or her income on water charges. Since privatisation, that has risen to 3.2 per cent. South West Water has been referred to extensively. Since privatisation, its bills have increased dramatically to £304 a year. Pensioners are being asked to pay 9 per cent. of their income on water charges alone. That is absolutely scandalous. In 1993-94, 12,452 people had their water cut off.

Privatisation has been a rip-off, and it will be a rip-off that will come to haunt the Government. I recommend the motion, which stands in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends, to the House.

6.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Labour bangs on about privatisation generally—so perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves of a few facts. It is worth recalling that, under the previous Labour Government, nationalised industries, including the nationalised water industry, made losses—large losses. In 1979, when Labour left office, the losses of the nationalised industries cost taxpayers £35 million each and every week in today's money. That was some £35 million of taxpayers' money being spent on meeting losses, which was therefore not available to invest in the national health service, in schools or for the benefit of pensioners.

By contrast, today, the privatised companies, including the privatised water companies, are paying about £50 million per week into the Exchequer. That is money that can be used in the NHS, for schools and for the benefit of pensioners.

It is worth recalling that in 1976 the previous Labour Government—supported at the time by the Liberals—overnight announced a moratorium on all new construction work by water companies. The previous Labour Government cut their spending on the water industry generally by 30 per cent. and, specifically, cut their capital investment on sewerage by 50 per cent. Labour policies resulted in economic mismanagement and environmental neglect. It is, in part, the Labour party's dereliction of duty that we have had to tackle—and we have done so to the benefit of consumers and the environment.

However, the truth is that the Labour party is in a mess on its policy for water. It cannot bring itself to admit and acknowledge the success of privatisation, yet cannot bring itself to say what it would do differently.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who, at the moment, seems to be acting leader of the Labour party, was quoted last month, in "Water Bulletin", as saying:

"There is one area where we might be looking for some new form of public control and that is water . . . I am neither ruling in nor ruling out a 100 per cent. ownership".

Heavens above, one would have thought that the Labour party should either have the guts to say that it will renationalise the water industry, or not. But, clearly, it is too much to expect the Labour party of designer suits and blow-dry hairstyles to make it clear whether it would be prepared for an incoming Labour Government to spend several billions of pounds of public money buying back shares in the water companies rather than investing in improving environmental protection.

Indeed, only this month out comes yet another Labour party policy document on the environment, produced by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is giggling at the moment, with no fewer than seven members of the shadow Cabinet involved. But what is interesting about the document—entitled "Report of the Labour Party Policy Commission on the Environment"—is that at no time did either Opposition Front-Bench spokesman make any reference to it. I am not surprised, because it has 218 paragraphs, and, pathetically, just five of them deal with water.

Does that document make Labour policy on water any clearer? The House must judge, for in a gem of blur-like opaqueness, which now characterises Labour policy, it states:

"We will ensure that the actions of all private water companies are under public control."

We look forward in the coming months to hearing from Labour Members just what is meant by that, or, as one Labour Member said, "Democratic public control, comrades." But the truth, I suspect, is that they do not really know themselves.

Labour bangs on about profits. It is a sobering thought that the new model Labour party still finds "profits" a dirty word. But the reality is that water companies need to be profitable to fund capital investment programmes. Indeed, water companies are reinvesting up to two thirds of profits, and all companies are spending more on investment than they are earning in profits. Some, such as Northumbrian and Anglian, are spending up to twice as much. The water companies have been investing £3 billion a year since privatisation to make up for the earlier chronic under-investment when the water industry—

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will have noticed that the motion and amendments before us specifically mention Scottish issues. Neither the Minister for the Environment and Countryside nor the Under-Secretary of State have chosen to mention Scotland in their speeches. Is it in order for those on the Government Front Bench to ignore the motion that we are debating?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The Chair is not responsible for the content of a speech, save whether it is relevant or not.

Mr. Baldry: I have not heard very much from anyone in the House about Scotland today. But what I did hear was the Labour party banging on about prices and choosing to ignore the fact that investment by the water companies in improving water quality and standards is massive. It works out at about £8 million a day—£5,000 every minute, and, on average, some £960 per household in the five years to 1995. All water services for the average householder in England cost about 55p a day, which is less than the cost of a bottle of fizzy water. That is a reasonable sum to ensure high standards by the water companies.

What is more, customers have more than got their money back through new investment in water services, which over five years averages £960 per household. That is £192 a year, 52p a day, in new investment for every household in the country. Against that background the average charge of 55p a day cannot be said by any fair-minded person to be unreasonable.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Bill:—

The House divided: Ayes 257, Noes 291.

Division No. 298] **[7.02 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Barron, Kevin
Adams, Mrs Irene	Battle, John
Allen, Graham	Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Alton, David	Beggs, Roy
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Bell, Stuart
Armstrong, Hilary	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Ashton, Joe	Bennett, Andrew F.
Austin-Walker, John	Benton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bermingham, Gerald
Barnes, Harry	Berry, Roger

Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*

Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the water industry in England and Wales on its achievements since privatisation and commends the proposals for restructuring in Scotland which will facilitate the use of private finance; notes the improvements which have been made in environmental standards in particular with regard to the quality of rivers and bathing waters, and the consistently high quality of drinking water; notes that the industry in England and Wales is pressing ahead with a £3 billion a year investment programme which will result in further improvements to the upgrading of water and sewerage systems without placing undue burdens on consumers; and further notes that the privatised industry is successfully using its expertise to gain major contracts overseas, something which could not have been achieved under the policies of the last Labour government.

Wildlife (Conservation)

7.17 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): I beg to move,

That the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 13th July, be approved.

The draft Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations were first laid before the House on 4 July. Hon. Members will realise that the draft order that we are considering today was laid on 13 July and that the original draft was withdrawn because two minor corrections were necessary so that two of the regulations should read as intended. I apologise to hon. Members that an earlier oversight made those small drafting adjustments necessary. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The House owes the Minister an apology for being so noisy when he is seeking to speak. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber go quietly and quickly?

Mr. Atkins: I am suitably impressed that the House should apologise to me. That has never happened before and doubtless will never happen again.

The draft regulations to be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 transpose into national law for Great Britain the provisions of the EC directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in May 1992.

The House will know that we are fortunate in having a substantial body of existing national legislation for nature conservation. The challenge has been to integrate the new requirements of the directive into what we already have.

The directive was a significant milestone for the conservation of the most endangered habitat types and species in the European Union. The draft regulations demonstrate the Government's determination to give proper effect to its requirements.

As my right hon. Friend told the House in his written answer on 4 July, the regulations consolidate the Government's provision and practices in respect of those sites and species of international importance covered by the directive.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Schedule 2 —"European protected species of animals"—specifies that all species of whales are protected. Can the Minister answer a simple question? Under schedule 2, is Norway entitled to apply for a derogation for the killing of whales? Secondly, has it applied for a derogation? If it has or does, do the British Government have the ability to veto it? And will the Government oppose such a derogation and use their veto?

Mr. Atkins: What a good question—I shall endeavour to discover the answer to it and tell the hon. Gentleman when I reply to the debate. It is an important question. The hon. Gentleman has a recognised and considerable interest in these matters and he deserves a proper answer. If I cannot give him one this evening, I shall certainly write to him with the details.

The draft regulations follow the public consultation that took place last autumn. All those who responded have received a letter explaining the contents of the regulations. A copy has been placed in the Library, together with letters from respondents plus a summary analysis of their contents. A summary of responses to the public consultation on the amendments to the general development order effected by the regulations has also been placed in the Library.

The regulations tell a clear story. In essence, they build on our existing legislative base, which provides the framework for successful nature conservation in this country. Much of the text of the regulations restates the provisions of existing law, modified as appropriate, to ensure that the terms of the directive are transposed. The regulations provide for the selection and designation of sites that will become special areas of conservation—SACs—as required by the directive. They also give effect to the requirement that by June 1995 the Government must submit a proposed site list to the European Commission.

The Government are receiving advice from the nature conservation agencies, through the joint nature conservation committee, on their site proposals based on the directive's scientific criteria. We shall consider that advice and publish a list of sites for consultation before the end of the year. The Government are committed to preliminary consultation with all owners and occupiers and other affected interests on the sites before submission to the Commission takes place. Further full and detailed discussions about the management and definition of sites will also take place before the Community list is agreed.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I appreciate that the Minister is going through matters logically. What, in his and the Department's view, is likely to be the major effect of this legislation as opposed to pre-existing legislation, and specifically is not the weakness of it the fact that the limitation to owners and occupiers' liability will remain a limitation under the new proposals, despite the fact that it is one of the great loopholes of the present legislation?

Mr. Atkins: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Having taken advice, we very much believe that voluntary management and involvement with owners and occupiers of sites is a better way of doing things than legislating fiercely. As the hon. Gentleman might be aware, we have the reserve right to impose a compulsory purchase order where necessary, but that is the nuclear option and not something that we want to use. However, we are required to do that under the directive and that is what we will do if necessary. Experience suggests that voluntary arrangements and agreements are a much better way of doing things.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): I very much endorse what my hon. Friend says. As he knows, I have a number of sites of special scientific interest in my constituency. A letter that I received today from the National Farmers Union expresses concern that the consultation procedures will not be as good under the European proposals as they have been under the previous arrangements. I urge the fullest consultation with owners and farmers to make a success of the proposals, which can happen if there is genuine co-operation.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I am aware of his constituency interest in these matters. We have only belatedly heard from the NFU and the Country Landowners Association, but I assure my right hon. Friend

[Mr. Atkins]

that we will ensure that consultation is proper and thorough. Quite frankly, that is the only way that the procedure will work. He was right to say that, if we make it work properly, the benefits will be substantial.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) took the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through the House. They will recall that during its Committee stage they said, understandably, that consultation was highly desirable. The Minister now says that it must be thorough. That involves staff. Quite often, the reason given for delay was that there was not sufficient staff either in the Department or in the Scottish Office. Are the Government sure that they now have sufficient staff to carry out a thorough consultation, about which I am sure the Minister is sincere, because that takes a very long time and many, many staff hours?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that point. I cannot give him a direct answer but I am satisfied that, as matters stand, we have the necessary staff. We are not lagging behind on this matter, despite the little hiccup in tabling the regulations. That was because we wanted to get them right. We are doing well in comparison with other members of the European Union and it is our intention that that remains so. If the concern the hon. Gentleman raises turns out to be the case, I shall be as worried as he is and I will have to take the necessary action.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Regulation 49 refers to a project continuing if there is an overriding public interest and states that that interest

"may be of a social or economic nature."

My constituency has the chance of an industrial development involving the creation of 1,500 new jobs on an enterprise zone site which, unfortunately, impinges marginally on a site of special scientific interest. Can the Minister provide me with a definition—if not this evening, at some future date—of "economic nature"?

Mr. Atkins: I hear sotto voce from my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who speaks on these matters for the Scottish Office, that he is aware of the case. If the hon. Gentleman would care to approach him, he will write to the hon. Gentleman with the details and perhaps they can then be discussed in the usual way.

The regulations provide for the establishment of a register of European sites, which will be open to public inspection. The entry of a site on the register will be notified to owners, occupiers, local authorities and any other interested bodies which the Secretary of State may direct. The register will be the formal means to record the sites that will be subject to the protection provisions in the regulations.

A cornerstone provision of the regulations is the introduction of new duties on Ministers and the nature conservation agencies to exercise their functions in order to secure compliance with the requirements of the directive. All Ministers and the nature conservation agencies must use such of the provisions in existing nature conservation legislation and in these regulations as may be necessary to secure the protection of sites and species as required by the directive.

All Government and public bodies are given a new duty to have regard to the directive's requirements in the exercise of their functions. The Government remain committed to the voluntary principle of land management and it is expected that where management is necessary most of the conservation needs of designated sites will be delivered through voluntary management arrangements negotiated between owners and occupiers and the nature conservation agencies.

The regulations also allow for the making of byelaws to control third-party activities and will enable the existing powers of compulsory purchase in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to be used if necessary, as I said earlier, as the only means of safeguarding the conservation value of the land.

The regulations introduce a highly significant new framework for the conservation of European sites in the marine environment. All statutory bodies with functions relevant to marine conservation must, under a new duty, exercise their functions to secure compliance with the requirements of the directive. Identified relevant authorities such as sea fisheries committees, harbour authorities and local authorities are further empowered to join with one another in drawing up schemes of management for those sites.

Consistent with the Government's declared approach to the inter-agency management of the coastal zone, the Government expect that, for the most part, those authorities will work together voluntarily to establish such schemes founded on the advice that the nature conservation agencies are under a duty to provide. However, under the regulations Ministers may give directions to those bodies in respect of the establishment of a scheme of management, and will do so at any time if it seems necessary to secure the conservation of a site.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already announced, we wish to bring a number of additional controls relating to consents and permissions within the specific scope of the directive. They will be contained in further draft regulations to be laid before the House in due course. I believe that the regulations represent a thorough implementation package to comply with the requirements of the habitats directive, and I commend them to the House.

7.29 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Although the directive may be a little overdue—for technical reasons which have been explained—we give it what must, sadly, be a qualified welcome. We believe that an opportunity has been missed: primary legislation would have been preferable to secondary legislation, especially in overcoming the difficulties of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

I am very concerned about the lack of information in the public domain about sites of special scientific interest. I do not know whether the Minister is aware that, some months ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) tried to obtain detailed information about the damage being done to such sites by tabling written questions. I shall not bore the House with the arcane procedures that proved necessary; suffice it to say

that it eventually proved impossible to table questions that could be answered. Either blocking answers were in place, or no Minister appeared competent to reply.

We then consulted English Nature, which refused to give us a list of damaged sites on the ground that the National Audit Office had all the information. The NAO said that it could not provide the information. Eventually it published a report, which gave no specific details; it provided only statistics, with one or two examples thrown in. I hope that at some point the Minister will consider the great black hole that needs to be filled: I know that a vast amount of data is involved, but it should be brought into the public domain so that Members of Parliament can gain access to detailed information about not only the incidence of damage but what it adds up to, and the difficulties that have been encountered.

Mr. Atkins: Neither my Department nor I intend to hide such information, which is generally available. It might be useful for us to discuss the matter after the debate, through the usual channels, to establish whether there are ways of providing the information the hon. Gentleman wants. It may be a simple process of bringing all the information together, rather than avoiding disclosure. That should not be particularly difficult. I will check, if it will help.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the Minister. I should be even more grateful if he would go a step further, and give me a guarantee that he will find some way of bringing the information into the public domain.

Mr. Atkins: I never give absolute guarantees, but I will do my best.

Mr. Howarth: That is fair enough, although none of our best is ever good enough.

The NAO report, published earlier this year, stated that, since 1987, 800 reports of damage to sites of special scientific interest had been made. None of us can be complacent about such a serious matter, and I hope that the Government are not complacent. Other statistics from the 1990 countryside survey commissioned by the Department of the Environment itself revealed that there had been a decrease in the bio-diversity of many sites over the preceding 10 years. Again, there is no room for complacency.

The most notorious examples are the St. Catherine hill SSSI, north of Twyford down, and the Itchen valley/Winchester meadows SSSI, south of Twyford down. Tragically, roads have been driven through both. Sir William Wilkinson, the former chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council, has said:

> "Good landowners protect SSSIs but bad boys get away with murder. The most recent example that springs to mind was Twyford Down where the agent of destruction was the Government."

I note that the Government are not currently represented by the Minister responsible.

Many of the sites involved provide habitats for various flora and fauna—birds, for instance. Over the past 20 years, the population of seven species of common farmland bird has declined by more than 50 per cent. According to a study conducted by the British Trust for Ornithology—

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): A fine organisation.

Mr. Howarth: Indeed it is. According to that study, between 1969 and 1991 the tree sparrow population fell by 80 per cent., the corn bunting population by 76 per cent., the grey partridge population by 73 per cent., the turtle dove population by 72 per cent., the reed bunting population by 50 per cent., the linnet population by 56 per cent. and the skylark population by 54 per cent. That is very worrying.

There is also legitimate concern about peatlands. Perhaps the Minister can give us an idea of whether he intends such sites to be included among the proposed special areas of conservation. There is already ample evidence to suggest that natural peat bogs—there is one in my constituency—are being routinely and systematically damaged or threatened by developments of one kind or another. It is instructive to note that the threat is not posed only by housing developments and the like; in my constituency, an unusual combination—the manager of Liverpool football club, a nightclub owner and a solicitor—

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Hear, hear.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman had better wait until the end of the sentence before saying "Hear, hear".

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Liverpool football club is already an endangered species.

Mr. Howarth: I presume that my hon. Friend does not go to Cardiff City matches too often.

Those three people propose not to build a housing development, but to convert the peat bog in my constituency to a landfill site. Hon. Members may ask what a nightclub owner, the manager of Liverpool football club and a solicitor are doing in such a business; I have asked that question myself, and I have yet to receive a satisfactory answer. It clearly does not bode well for the future of the peat bog.

Other important habitats—such as dry heathlands, which are a natural habitat for rare and threatened species of plant life, birds and butterflies—are equally threatened, and in some instances are already being undermined by inappropriate use. Will the Minister give an assurance that he will take into account the importance of such sites—both existing SSSIs and other important habitats—undertake a review and, where necessary, revoke planning consents that threaten their survival? If we are serious, we must consider not only sites that have not yet been damaged but sites that might be damaged, or might be subject to planning consents that would threaten the survival of wildlife.

The Minister might also tell us how he proposes to achieve favourable conservation status for annexe 2 species such as the shoredock plant and the marsh fritillary butterfly. He may not lie awake thinking about such matters, but they are important to many people who are concerned about the survival of those species. It is clear that unless such habitats are managed by specialists and with proper sensitivity, there is a real danger that they could disappear altogether.

I will deal now with management agreements and nature conservation orders. They are, after all, the most significant cause of long-term damage to SSSIs and, as the NAO report made clear, they often result in neglect and mismanagement. The Government are proposing a revised

[Mr. Howarth]

form of management agreements to encourage landowners to manage their land. However, that is effective only when the land owner is willing to enter into an agreement. If he will not accept responsibility, which has happened in many cases, the relevant statutory agency can apply to the Secretary of State for a special nature conservation order.

However, there are serious problems when a dispute arises. The Government have the option of acquiring the land by a compulsory purchase order. Clearly, that is something that we support as far as it goes, but the evidence pertaining to CPOs in this respect does not give me any reason—and should not give the House any reason—necessarily to believe that that is the right answer unless it is differently in future.

The CPO scheme already exists in legislation and is carried out by statutory agencies, but the bureaucracy and the limited resources available for their administration often make it unworkable. I am aware of only one site on which a CPO has been served, and that is Westhay moor in Somerset. There were serious problems, but it still took three years for the dispute to be settled and for the CPO to go through. Clearly, that is unsatisfactory, and we need assurances that the CPO system as it is to apply will be an improvement. The regulations offer little reassurance that SACs will be protected when disputes occur. In the past, the Government have often failed to introduce immediate and effective measures.

Problems are anticipated in Scotland where the use of a CPO as a fallback measure could be costly and the purchase of a large estate such as Mar lodge would require several times more than the annual budget for Scottish Natural Heritage. I should be grateful if the Minister will say something about available resources because it is clear that often they do not match the job that needs to be done.

I should also like some information about how the Government intend to deal with trouble spots. I have in mind, for example, the case of an SSSI and a proposed motorway scheme. How does the Minister see disputes being resolved in such trouble spots within the new SAC framework? There is surely a strong case for undertaking a thorough review of all such sites, including and perhaps especially those subject to unsuitable developments. The whole question needs to be examined closely through the planning system, and I should welcome more information on it in the wind-up speech.

Although I welcome the fact that the Government are to consult on such sites, it is very important that the consultation exercise should go as wide as possible and include not only the owners of sites but non-governmental organisations which have a legitimate interest in them. I hope that the exercise will not be confined to the specific selection of sites but will cover the criteria to be used at the stage prior to their selection because it is important that such issues are considered in advance of selection.

I shall deal next with marine and coastal issues. In a parliamentary answer on 11 November 1992, the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside said that his Department would ensure that

"the proposals for implementation of the marine conservation aspects of the habitat directives fully meet the directive's requirements."—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 791.]

Measures for marine conservation lag behind those for conservation on land. The legislation gives specific powers through byelaws to maintain principle of special areas of conservation. The nature conservation agencies can use those powers inside and outside SACs but not in the case of marine sites. The regulations state that the competent authorities will have

"regard to the requirements of the Directive".

However, it is not clear whether that is limited to SACs. It is essential to promote good practice inside and outside protected areas given the highly mobile nature of the marine environment.

The regulations do not give the Secretary of State for the Environment a lead role in directions concerning SACs. That could lead to conflict, confusion and delay in the management of SACs. Priorities for fisheries, transport, mineral extraction and other activities can be in serious conflict with nature conservation objectives. The Secretary of State for the Environment already has a lead role in the case terrestrial protected areas under section 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to assist in the conservation of SSSIs. The same should be true for marine SACs. Will the Minister give us an assurance that that issue will be considered seriously?

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Has my hon. Friend considered what amounts to deregulation in the dredging of aggregates, which has altered the foreshore line of rivers at the expense of the environment and bird life? Does he agree that it should be properly controlled and regulated?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend probably has a greater knowledge than any other hon. Member of the River Mersey, on which he worked for many years. I believe that there is also a problem with the River Severn, but his point was well made and I sympathise strongly. That leads me neatly to my final point, which relates to barrages—especially those proposed in south Wales—and their possible effect on the migratory runs of salmon and sea trout.

Apparently, there are seven species of migratory fish in the rivers of south Wales, all of which are subject to barrage developments or proposals. The nature of their life cycle, which involves between two and 12 passages through the estuaries, makes them extremely vulnerable to such developments. Barrage developments create obstructions to the passage of migratory fish, as is well known, and an effective fish passage is crucial to the future of fish stocks.

The River Usk, which is the subject of one such proposal, contains the rare and high conservation status twaite shad, lamprey and allis shad. These species are considered to be in general decline. The National Rivers Authority for Wales estimates that the cost of monitoring and mitigating the adverse impact of developments on the River Usk would be considerable. The development on the River Taff would require the purchase and release of hatchery-reared salmon smolt and it is estimated that 60,000 smolts a year would be required at a cost of more than £1 a smolt. There are clearly a number of issues to be dealt with.

Mr. Morgan: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is so fascinating about the conflict between barrage developments and the migratory fish species in south Wales which he has listed is that it is only at the end of south Wales's heavy industrialisation phase that the sea

trout, or the sewin as we call them, and salmon have returned to our rivers? At the very time when salmon and sea trout are returning to the Tawe, the Taff and other rivers, people for some reason decide to erect barrages, thereby preventing with physical concrete obstacles what pollution and the coalfields have prevented for the past 200 years.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. His knowledge of south Wales is almost unparalleled, and few if any of the things in the rivers or on the ground escape his eagle-eyed attention. However, to deal with his comments from a conservation point of view, I was lucky enough once to catch a sewin. It is quite a considerable fish to catch. So, it is important not only in conservation terms for its own sake, but because there are sporting problems.

Mr. Morgan: They taste very nice, as well.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friend said, they taste nice as well.

To return to the point at which I started, while we feel that this is a missed opportunity and that there is a case, which we regret has not been taken up by the Government, for primary legislation, we nevertheless welcome the directive, partial though it is, and we shall not be dividing the House on it.

7.49 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I welcome the measure as a flexible and sensible approach to conservation in this country. I have 10 points which I would like to put briefly to the Minister on these highly complicated regulations. I regret to say to the Minister that my points are inevitably technical and, therefore, I do not necessarily expect him be able to respond to them fully this evening. Perhaps, he may be able to respond to me in due course. I also apologise for putting the points to him rather late in the day. I appreciate that he would have preferred more notice.

First, regulation 2 defines the occupier for purposes of part III—protection of species—but not for the purposes of part II; the section on conservation of natural habitat. Especially in the context of regulation 13—notice to landowners, relevant authorities et cetera—and regulation 16, it is not clear whether "occupier" includes those having rights of hunting, shooting, fishing or taking of the game or fish. That is, of course, important because those with sporting interests have an interest in preserving the species, as defined in part III.

Indeed, it is significant that the European Commission and the European Parliament have confirmed the part played by country sports in conservation. A resolution specifically dealing with the protection of wild birds, initiated by Mr. Jean Raffin, a French Green party Member of the European Parliament, which was adopted at the beginning of February, acknowledged that, if sporting activities are

"practised sustainably in accordance with the principle of wise use of renewable natural resources",

sportsmen

"can make a valuable contribution to habitat conservation, which is a key feature of many species conservation strategies."

Commissioner Padraig Flynn, no less, said:

"the deterioration and destruction of habitats pose more serious threats to the survival of wild birds in Europe than 'hunting' as such."

It would therefore be helpful if the Minister could confirm that, for the purposes of part II of the regulation, the occupier also includes those having sporting rights. It may be necessary to ask the owner or occupier who else has sporting rights over his lands and, perhaps, those with that interest could be subsequently notified.

Secondly, regulation 7 provides for the Secretary of State to draw up a list of sites eligible for identification of sites of community importance—so-called SCIs. There is no indication that there will be any consultation with the owners and occupiers of such sites before the list is sent to the European Commission on or before 5 June 1995. The Commission and the Government will adopt a final list by, at the latest, June 1988. Finally, the designated special areas of conservation, the so-called SACs, have to be designated by June 2004.

If the Minister and his Department are to supply that list to the European Commission by June 1995, time is ticking on if they are to have the full consultation for which my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) called in his intervention. It would be necessary to begin that consultation process pretty well straight away. So, can the Minister explain the Government's intention on the nature, extent and timing of the consultation with owners and occupiers over the preparation of the list of potential SCIs? It would also be helpful if a list of SCIs were not published until full consultation had been carried out. Once such things go on a list, they have a habit of staying on that list, even if turns out that, as a result of the consultation process, they should be not be on the list at all.

Thirdly, article 4(2) of the directive provides that SCIs shall be adopted not only on the basis of the criteria set out in annex III, but on the framework of five biogeographical regions referred to in article 1(c)(iii). SCIs in the UK will need to be selected in the framework of the Atlantic biogeographical region. That is also important because it would be folly if we were to designate far more sites which have a Atlantic ecosystem, only to find that the French and the Irish were designating very few sites and, indeed, on those sites which were designated, there was not the same compliance ratio as there would undoubtedly be in this country under my hon. Friend's Department.

Therefore, it would be helpful if the Minister could explain what steps are to be taken to ensure that the Government will include on the list of potential SCIs only so many sites as are appropriate, and no more, in the context of the Atlantic region and in the light of the performance of other member states. That would also give us the opportunity to ascertain how closely our compliance was compared with that of other EC countries.

Fourthly, in paragraph 2.2.4 of their earlier consultation paper, the Government stated that special areas of conservation, so-called SACs, will have already been notified as SSSIs, to which the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) referred. The regulations make no mention of that commitment. Should the Government consider in any circumstances the designation of a land-based SAC, or include land outside an existing SSSI within a SAC, without first giving the owners and occupiers involved an opportunity to make representations to the appropriate nature conservation agency through the SSSI notification process? It would be helpful if the Minister could confirm their intention regarding the relationship between SSSIs and land-based SACs.

Fifthly, management agreements offer an important mechanism for developing an effective partnership

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

between landowners and nature conservation agencies to manage, conserve, restore and protect European sites and land adjacent to them. That voluntary nature of conforming with the regulations has already been mentioned in the debate by a number of hon. Members. Indeed, in his opening remarks, the Minister indicated its importance by saying that the compulsory purchase procedure would be used only in "nuclear deterrent circumstances" or some words similar to that. He has acknowledged the voluntary nature, which is absolutely essential if all those involved, particularly those who have to manage the sites, are to do that effectively.

The Government should recognise that a major increase in the real level of resources available to the major nature conservation agencies will be essential if our international, national, regional and local conservation objectives are to be achieved. For example, many of the land management systems which have produced internationally important wildlife habitats such as lowland heath are no longer economical. Substantial financial support may be needed if landowners are to continue to operate uneconomic farming systems or to restore such systems where they have been lost for nature conservation purposes.

I very much welcome the schemes which the Government have already introduced, such as the environmentally sensitive areas—I have two such areas in my constituency, the upper Thames tributaries and the Cotswold hills—the countryside stewardship scheme, which is operated so successfully by my hon. Friend's Department and, the Tir Cymen scheme which operates in Wales. I am sorry that my Welsh is not as good as it should be and I apologise to all Welshmen present if my pronunciation is not correct.

Mr. Morgan: Nought out of 10.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will intervene and tell me how it should be pronounced.

Mr. Morgan: It should be Tir Cymen. With a little bit of effort, the hon. Gentleman could do a little better.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I will try again. Is it Tir Cymen? No doubt the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong. No doubt all in Wales will be cheering at the success of this scheme and of the habitat scheme.

All these schemes have an important role to play in European sites, as elsewhere. I mention here the Land Drainage Bill which I promoted and which went through all its stages two Fridays ago. It will give local authorities and internal land drainage boards an obligation to consider environmental aspects before major drainage schemes are carried out. That is a major step forward, because we have lost 50 per cent. of all our wetland areas since the war. I drained 25 acres of my own wetland under a very high grant regime in the 1970s. Having found that the land has never been economic, I rather wish that I had never done it. If my Bill had been in place then, I would not have been allowed to drain that land and we should all have been the richer culturally and environmentally as a result.

It would be helpful, therefore, if the Minister could give a high priority to management agreements at European sites while accepting that the resources required for that purpose should not be made available at the expense of other SSSIs or of other schemes that secure conservation benefits in the wider countryside. Having set up the SSSI regime, it would be a tragedy if we found that the European sites competed for the existing resources and that compliance with the existing SSSIs was weakened as a result. I hope that my hon. Friend can give us some assurance in that respect.

It would also be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister could confirm that no SAC will be designated until the resources required to sustain the necessary positive management of the SAC have been secured. What would be the point in us designating an area and then finding that we did not have the resources necessary to ensure that the area was managed according to the regulations?

Sixthly, regulation 18 provides for any existing notification of operations likely to damage an SSSI to be amended, for the purposes of the directive, at any time. The regulation provides for owners and occupiers to be notified of such amendments, but not for consultation with them. Surely owners and occupiers should have an opportunity to make representations to the nature conservation agencies regarding any amendments that the Minister may make as they already have under the existing SSSI regime. That surely complies with the rules of natural justice. Surely anyone should be able to make representations regarding a change in designation before that designation is made.

I am also concerned that regulation 18(3) leaves nature conservation agencies to decide which owners or occupiers should be notified of amendments. In view of the penalties likely to face owners and occupiers who damage protected sites without reasonable excuse, surely it is unreasonable for the agencies to have that discretion. It would be helpful for the Minister to outline what opportunities, if any, will be available to the owners and occupiers to question the decision to amend the list of potentially damaging operations in respect of the European site. It would also be helpful if the Minister could explain why it has been decided to give the nature conservation agencies the discretion to decide which owners and occupiers they should notify of the amendments in any one case.

It would be helpful if the Minister could lay out the parameters for how far outside the designated site—*[Interruption.]* I can see my hon. Friend looking at his watch. I am a long way through the points that I must make to him. It would be helpful if we could have some idea of how far outside the designated site owners and occupiers will be notified.

Seventhly, regulations 50 to 59, to which the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has already referred, provide for extant planning permissions that may affect European sites to be reviewed. It is important that compensation is payable to anybody holding such permission which is subsequently modified, discontinued or revoked. I believe that such a provision is contained in regulations 50 to 59, but I know from reading the regulations that they are extremely complicated. It would be helpful to have the Minister's clarification on this point.

I have in mind the following example. Let us suppose that a quarry was operating and that it was then decided to designate it as a SAC. The quarry might have an existing planning permission. As a result of the designation, its operations might be curtailed or modified in some way. Would the quarry owner receive compensation? It would be helpful if the Minister could clarify that point.

Eighthly—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am at the eighth out of 10 points, as my hon. Friend the Minister will be glad to know. I am particularly concerned—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have no power to curtail anybody's speech tonight, beyond the final one. I remind the hon. Gentleman and all others that the whole debate has to be contained within an hour and a half.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for that advice, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have come to my eighth point out of 10 so I shall be fairly brief in concluding my speech.

Eighthly, I am particularly concerned that it appears that some permitted development works by farmers and others could now be disallowed without compensation. That could happen if it were decided under the regulations that planning permission was needed for such works and it was then refused. As the Minister is aware, there are certain permitted development rights under existing planning legislation which can be carried out without planning permission, such as the erection of certain farm buildings, although they have to be notified to the local authority. Under the current system, where permitted development rights may be withdrawn under an article 4 direction, compensation is payable. It would be helpful if the Minister could explain why compensation is not to be offered where permitted development rights are withdrawn under the regulations.

Ninthly, I understand that the provisions relating to planning permission and permitted development in part IV of the regulations apply to any development affecting European sites, whether or not the development lies within their boundaries. I am concerned that that could lead to quite innocuous developments being subject to further consultation and control when they are likely neither significantly nor adversely to affect the European site. One can envisage an immediately adjoining or a not-so-immediately adjoining landowner wishing to carry out a development. He carries it out in all innocence under the existing planning regulations only to be told at some time in the future that he comes within the scope of the regulations. We owe it to all those who may be affected by the regulations to ensure that they are widely publicised in a form that everyone can understand. I am sure that no one will thereby fall foul of them.

It would be helpful if the Minister could explain how local planning authorities will distinguish between innocuous proposals and those likely to have significantly adverse effects. It would also be helpful if the Minister would agree to review his advice to local authorities on this matter and the regulations themselves if local authorities appear in practice to take an unnecessarily interfering approach to development proposals outside European sites. It is only a matter of human justice that those who live some distance from the site should be well appraised of any possible effects that it might have on their activities.

Tenthly—and finally, the Minister will be glad to know—article 2(3) of the directive requires that

"Measures taken pursuant to this directive shall take account of economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics."

That is fundamental to a rural area such as mine. The requirement does not appear in the regulations although—the Minister may be able to give me clarification on this—it may be that regulation 3(2), which gives the Secretary of State powers, but not the ability to issue directions, covers the point. It would be helpful if the Minister could confirm that the Government, nature conservation agencies and local authorities will heed that fundamental requirement in all their actions relating to the directive.

I apologise to the House for that rather long, technical tirade. The regulations are highly technical. They will have a fundamental and long-lasting effect in the conservation of flora and fauna. I welcome that most wholeheartedly. Equally, I ask the Minister to give clarification on the 10 points that I have raised this evening.

8.8 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Can the Minister tell us exactly how the exclusions will work? We all welcome the codification of the regulations in so far as they bring up to date the European habitats directive, although they are a month late and there are errors in their production, and so on. However, in at least one respect, they weaken the existing nature conservation provisions because of the ease of exclusion. I do not wish to appear to be spoiling the party tonight, but these are important issues as regards exactly how the exclusions will work.

I am extremely puzzled as to how the regulations are meant to apply and whether one can wriggle out of the protection measures through what one might call Henry VIII powers. In other words, if the Secretary of State decides that, in spite of the protection that has been conferred, he wants a development to take place—such as Twyford down or the Cardiff bay barrage—he can then just say that he has decided that there are reasons of an overriding public interest nature for developing. He can thereby reduce or eliminate altogether the nature conservation interest in a marsh, fen or hill, or in a wetland as was the case in the barrage that I mentioned.

The problem is that we always imagine, when we pass legislation of this type, that it confers real protection. It looks like a bulky document of 70 or 80 pages, it seems to repeat the words "nature conservation interest" and it appears to legislate to protect that interest. However, when one looks at the details, one sees that it is remarkably easy to wriggle out of the obligations if the Secretary of State feels like it. At other times, it seems easy when the European Commission feels like it.

It is difficult for us to accept that this is a wonderful piece of legislation when there are overriding Henry VIII powers to say that the nature conservation interest is secondary in a particular site to the socio-economic or other interests. Who decides whether it is really an overriding interest? Is it the Secretary of State or the European Commission? It is not clear at all.

Regulation 24(6) shows the major weakness of the habitats directive compared with the wild birds directive. It states:

"Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type or a priority species the reasons referred to in paragraph (5) must be either . . . reasons relating to human health, public safety or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment".

That was the element that was there before, via the wild birds directive. However, the new element is introduced in the statement that other reasons may be considered

"which in the opinion of the European Commission are imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

How do we know what the European Commission will judge as being imperative reasons of overriding public interest? What are the criteria that it will use? Will it be jobs, or simply an opinion, which will have to be

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

considered before it is decided that a project is overriding? Must it be a direct employer, such as a new steelworks or a chemical plant where so many thousands will be employed? Will it be a piece of infrastructure such as a road, or a cosmetic piece of infrastructure such as the barrage on the Usk or at Cardiff bay, although they are not direct employers?

How do we decide what is really an overriding interest? What is to guide the European Commission? We do not know. In certain cases, it appears to be the European Commission that decides—other areas of exclusion are mentioned in regulation 48—while in regulation 49, it appears to be the Secretary of State.

The document states that the Commission will have the last word in deciding whether to override the provisions of the legislation, so the protection will, all of a sudden, disappear. It says:

"the competent authority may agree to the plan or project notwithstanding a negative assessment of the implications for the site"

That is negative in nature conservation terms. It continues that that may take place if there are

"other reasons which in the opinion of the European Commission are imperative reasons of overriding public interest".

However, the document continues:

"The Secretary of State may thereupon, if he thinks fit, seek the opinion of the Commission; and if he does so, he shall upon receiving the Commission's opinion transmit it to the authority."

Who has the last word? Is it the Secretary of State or the European Commission, and on what do they base it? They must receive advice from the local authority nature conservation body. How do they weigh it? Do they simply say that they like a particular economic or social project and decide that it overrides the nature conservation interest? That is a key area where the legislation weakens the nature conservation protection that is available today.

We should not delude ourselves and say that this is a great piece of legislation that in all cases strengthens the nature conservation interest. In certain areas, it puts Henry VIII powers in the hands of the Secretary of State and the collective college of cardinals of the European Commission. Those powers are not necessarily in the hands of the Environment Commissioners, because they are a mixed bag and the present one is certainly not interested in the environment at all. They appear to have the last word and they can say that a project of a socio-economic character that they judge to be of overriding public interest is more important than the inherent nature conservation interest in the site. The site will then go for economic development. Perhaps there are good reasons for doing that, but we must know in the legislation how they are to judge it.

In areas such as south Wales, that is of enormous controversy at the moment. That is because of the way in which the Cardiff bay barrage was handled, the way the Usk barrage proposal is supposed to be handled and the disaster that has already occurred at Tawe barrage. The last has been in place for only two years, but the National Rivers Authority has found serious de-oxygenation and a loss of the ability of migratory fish—the great glory of the Welsh river environment—to find gaps in the fish pass.

Very rare migratory species such as the allis shad and the twaite shad, which were mentioned by hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), have a serious difficulty for fish in not being good swimmers. A couple of lengths of the baths and they are knackered, one might say. That is a considerable problem for a fish, particularly when it is having to surmount a fish pass. That also applies to salmon, which are extremely strong swimmers. However, there has been a drop in the ability of salmon to move up the estuary to their spawning grounds at the Tawe barrage.

There are also problems for sea trout which, although they are not a protected species, have to surpass a barrage such as Tawe and the proposed barrages on the Taff Ely and the Usk. They might have to surmount such a barrage up to 12 times in their life cycle, while a salmon may have to do so only two or three times. That is a serious problem, and the conservation interest in such an area can be overridden on the say-so of the Secretary of State without his having to publish the correspondence.

I have been pressing the Secretary of State for a long time to publish his correspondence with the Environment Commissioners on how Ministers came to their decisions on the Cardiff bay barrage and how those decisions fitted in with the wild birds directive or the habitats directive. However, I cannot get it. Ministers say that the correspondence is confidential. If so, that is a Henry VIII power. The Secretary of State just decides that he feels like it, and does not have to prove that there is an overriding or socio-economic case for doing so. That may then eliminate the nature conservation interest.

The Secretary of State may just say that he wants to override the nature conservation interests, and he has the power to do it. He does not have to come to the House to explain and he does not have to publish his correspondence with the European Commissioner. I ask the Minister seriously to consider how to expose to public view the reasoning behind the overrides or exclusions in areas where the decision weakens the nature conservation protection. Will he at least place in the Library the exchanges of correspondence which he has with the Environment Commissioner? We would then know why he was doing something, and whether there was or was not an objection from the European Commission and from nature conservation bodies.

It would be of enormous benefit to the House if the Minister promised to publish any correspondence of the type that he has not been willing to publish on the Cardiff bay barrage. We would know whether there was any reasoning behind a decision, or whether it was a brutal use of Henry VIII powers of the kind which the spirit of the regulations is completely against.

8.18 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I am pleased to make a brief contribution to this important debate. As one would expect of someone who was raised on a dairy farm in Devon and who now represents a seat that is flanked to the west by Cornwall, to the north by the delights of Dartmoor, to the south by Plymouth Sound and to the east by the rolling pastures of the South Hams, I have a deep and abiding love of the countryside. I recognise that there are real threats to the wild fauna and flora which must to be protected.

I welcome the important measure which we are debating this evening as an important further plank in the Government's attempts to introduce that protection. I also welcome the fact that the measure is balanced. Surely balance must be the watchword in all environmental issues

—the balance between competing interests and between the need to develop economically, to farm and to enjoy the countryside and the vital need to preserve our natural heritage, because once it is gone, it is gone for ever.

I welcome the Government's proposals for consulting widely on the regulations. Surely it is important to take into account the views of farmers, landowners and groups that regularly use our countryside, on such an important measure.

The regulations give effect, in United Kingdom law, to the European Union natural habitats directive of 1992. As one who feels that many issues are best dealt with by national Governments and not at a European level, and that subsidiarity is such an important notion, I should be the first to admit that measures to protect the environment from destruction and waste, and anti-pollution measures, are the exceptions. They are best dealt with at European level.

It is important that the measure is being introduced on a Europe-wide basis, not merely to protect the countryside and fauna and flora throughout Europe, but to ensure that there is, as far as possible, that famous level playing field for industry and taxpayers in each European country.

One of the many matters on which I join forces with my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who spoke so creditably, is the need for an assurance from the Minister for the Environment and Countryside that similar measures will be enforced effectively throughout Europe. We know that our civil servants will vigorously enforce these protective measures. Can we have an assurance that the measures will be enforced adequately in Greece, Portugal and other European countries, so that a level playing field is introduced?

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend has a reputation for a strong interest in this issue. On applying the rules throughout the Community, clearly Britain has a more concentrated industrial area and less land mass is available for conservation areas than in France or Spain, for example. Is it not important that EC directives are applied fairly according to the geographical circumstances of member states?

Mr. Streeter: That is a valid point and my hon. Friend is right. The regulations have that measure of balance and take into account the geography of the United Kingdom.

I congratulate the Government on their record on environmental issues. Our Prime Minister took such a strong lead at the Rio conference two years ago. The truth is that many people talk about the environment, but we are the party that introduces environment protection measures. We understand that, to be successful, environment protection must be balanced and must take into account the interests of land users and other groups.

The measure aims to promote biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna, and it is very welcome. I have some specific questions, however, which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with, either in his reply or at some other stage. Schedule 2 of the regulations contains a list of protected species of animal, for example, the bat and the dormouse. That is extremely sensible. I anticipate pressure, however, in years to come to increase the list of protected species, for example, to include foxes and deer.

I want my hon. Friend's assurance that those who want to ban hunting in this country will not be able to use the measure to introduce, through the back door, legislation on which the people have firmly closed the front door. The best guardians of the countryside are people who enjoy the countryside and country and field sports. People who participate in hunting are a fine example. So often those who purport to care about animals forget to take nature as it really is. Nature is cruel.

The wildcat is one of the species protected in schedule 2. My family lives just outside Plympton in Devon and we are the proud owners of two cats, one of which might be described as a wildcat. Since we moved house recently, the cat regularly brings into the house mice, voles and rabbits and eats them before our very eyes. Nature is cruel and people who want to ban hunting should recognise that fact. I want an assurance that schedule 2 of the regulations cannot be used to ban hunting through the back door.

What will happen if protected species become pests to landowners, farmers and householders? Bats are in the list of protected species. We have bats in the roof of our house and we are stuck with them. Should those bats become a nuisance to us and to our neighbours, what advice can my hon. Friend the Minister give? I hope that the Government have thought the matter through. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members may have differing views from the hon. Member who has the Floor, but it is a part of the tradition of the House that those who are expressing their views are given a fair hearing, however unpopular those views might be with others.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Do you have the power that is given to Madam Speaker under the Mental Health Acts to section a Member, as it is quite clear that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) has gone completely loopy?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I should not want such a power—it would be a great temptation.

Mr. Streeter: As one who has listened to the speeches of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in the past two years, I must point out that people who live in glasshouses should not throw stones.

I have another question for my hon. Friend the Minister. What will happen if protected species of flora become a pest to landowners? The species of ragwort that is fatal to horses is greatly threatened in some areas. What will happen if it becomes protected, yet its existence is a real nuisance to wildlife?

On compliance costs, I mentioned the importance of balance. The regulations take into account the fact that they will have an impact on businesses. For environment protection to be sustainable, it must be affordable. On regulations 11 and 12, what proposals do the Government have for compensating businesses, should the regulations have an unfavourable impact on them?

Finally, I remember a picture from my childhood—my school playground, where a thistle had grown through the tarmac. Perhaps it was a symbolic representation of how, ultimately, nature cannot be suppressed. It is better to conserve and preserve before nature is under threat; it is better to get the balance between economic development and the protection of natural habitats right in the first place. The regulations are an important step along that road, and I support them.

8.29 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I shall not follow the speech of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter). If his speech was an argument for balance, I am against it. The debate tonight is much more urgent and necessary than he suggests. He implied that we are having the debate thanks to the wonderful British Government. That is not so. We are having it thanks to the European Union. Its directive requires us to have a debate to introduce regulations to implement it.

The key question underlying the debate and the regulations is whether they will make any difference. Some of us are extremely sceptical about that.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman always is.

Mr. Hughes: I am always sceptical about the Government's determination to deliver such a policy. The evidence commissioned by the Government and produced by officials leads us to believe that habitats, species and biodiversity are under extreme risk and in danger.

Throughout most of the earth's history, the rate of extinction has been in the order of one to 10 species per year. In the next 30 years, we risk losing between 150,000 and 300,000 species per year. The debate is about what part Britain should play in looking after our bit of the environment. People could produce litanies about the amount of woodland, marshland, wetland and heathland that has been lost.

Clear statistics exist on how some of the most common species of familiar birds like the robin are much more at risk than they used to be. Last year, the mouse-eared bat became extinct in the United Kingdom—the first mammal to be declared extinct since the wolf in the 1740s. I spent a night in wonderment in Pembrokeshire looking at horseshoe bats, the population of which is down to probably 1 per cent. of its population at the beginning of the century.

Most significantly, the Government should follow their own evidence on this matter. Let us consider the countryside and habitats as opposed to species. At the end of last year, the Government-commissioned countryside survey of 1990 was published. The broadsheet newspapers carried the following headlines:

"Decade of decline for wildlife".

"£3m survey reveals decline of this green and pleasant land".

"Hedgerows in steep decline, department's survey shows".

In *The Daily Telegraph* the headline read:

"Landscape census reveals depth of rural destruction".

Whether considering hedges, arable fields, weeds, pastures, meadowland, moorland or plant life, the survey showed that there had been significant reductions almost entirely across the board.

The important point is that the countryside survey covered the period since the implementation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. That, therefore, suggests that the legislation, which the regulations are meant to replicate, has done little to protect the habitats of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the hon. Gentleman note schedule 4 on page 58 of the order which contains a list of nine plants? The hon. Gentleman may recall that, in 1974-75, I took through the House the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act, a private member's Bill. Schedule 2 of that measure listed 21 species and it was consolidated into the 1991 Act. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in inviting the Minister to tell us what has happened to the 19 species that were listed in the 1975 Act and to establish how many of those species have become extinct in the British Isles?

Mr. Hughes: I am happy to endorse that request. It would be helpful if the Minister could answer it in his winding-up speech or later on advice.

The warning note is being sounded not only by Opposition Members and people with a particular interest in species. The last paragraph of the editorial in *The Times* last autumn following the countryside survey puts the argument as well as anyone:

"This big island is still too small to have room for savannahs or Saharas, or any more concrete or docklands jungles, or much more motorway. In its pointilliste variety, the countryside survey is a reminder of diversity, the natural British virtue. And a useful warning of the pressures that threaten it. The natives will not forgive their master if they ignore the Domesday warning."

If the Government are true to the convention which they signed at Rio de Janeiro and which, on environment day this year, they ratified—which we welcomed—if they are true to the goal of that convention, if their policy, as published in their documents, is to conserve and enhance biological diversity in the United Kingdom, they should seek to protect all species. They should not, as the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton argued, go for a balance whereby it is all right to lose some of them. We must keep the bio-diversity of Britain.

I should like to ask some questions and to request some answers. First, what additional protection do the regulations give to protected species that wildlife and countryside legislation does not already give? Secondly, in relation to both land-based habitats and marine habitats, is not it right that, because of the huge amount of consultation —to which I do not object—a huge compromise will be built in as a result of the regulations?

The Government still intend to rely on voluntary arrangements. Although there will be more marine protection under the regulations, all sorts of organisations with separate interests will temper the potential benefit of the regulations. The sea fisheries committee, National Rivers Authority, harbour authorities, local authorities and nature conservation agencies may conspire to mitigate and to reduce the effect of the regulations.

Thirdly, is it not the case that, after all the consultation, and although I accept the Government's undertaking that they will produce the list, as they are meant to, by 1995, they will produce a minimalist rather than a maximalist set of regulations, which do the minimum that is necessary to comply with the European directive? That has never reflected the urgency of the matter.

Fourthly, the present law is toothless and flawed. It was not I who used those words, but the Law Lords in the High Court in a major case last year. One said that, because the Wildlife and Countryside Act applied only to owners and occupiers,

"a stranger who enters the land for a few weeks solely to do some work on it does not fall into that category."

Therefore, the legislation is insufficient to penalise the fly tipper. Why will not the Minister come to the House with specific proposals that will allow him to say that, as a result, sites will be much more adequately protected?

Lastly, is it not the case that the only way to make sure that the regulations are effective is to ensure that all countryside and conservation schemes have one simple

objective: protection and enhancement of current habitats. We are sceptical and we are right to be so. We do not believe that, by the time the Government get around to doing things, many of the remaining habitats will be left to be protected.

8.38 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): We give the regulations, which are important to nature conservation, a guarded welcome.

I am sorry that some hon. Members took up much time without raising serious issues, despite the fact that many Labour Members wished to speak. I say to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) that those of us who object to people inflicting pain on animals for fun accept that there is cruelty in the wild, but when the hon. Member for Sutton thinks that it is normal behaviour to come into the House with a live vole and devour it in front of us, we shall accept that it is normal for people to inflict pain on animals.

The Minister will not be able to reply in detail to all the points that have been made in the debate, but I hope that he will take my points on board along with the other relevant points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

We want to see more monitoring, and my hon. Friend mentioned the need to ensure adequate funds for monitoring. We are concerned that monitoring is being cut. I wrote to the Department about cuts in the contract of the British Trust for Ornithology with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Those cuts will mean that work on integrated population management monitoring will be deferred for 12 months, that work on woodland and farmland habitats will be cut to six months and that posts designated for recovery processing will be reduced by 20 per cent. These cuts will affect next year's wetland bird survey.

The British Trust for Ornithology is an extremely cost-effective organisation that provides much reliable scientific data by amateur input, and I am surprised that the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has made the cuts. I cannot blame the Minister, as it is a cut within the total budget, not a budget cut, but I hope that he will look at this matter carefully because proper monitoring will not be possible without proper scientific research.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Does my hon. Friend share my concern that SSSIs are not necessarily offering protection? My hon. Friend knows well the Thorne and Hatfield moors in my constituency, which have not been protected despite their SSSI status. If the Government make Thorne moors a special area of conservation, will he join me in hoping that it will offer more protection than it has had previously?

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. He is well known for his campaigning for Thorne moors, which are a fine example of raised peat bog. I hope that the Minister takes that into account.

We are a bit sceptical about the Government's record on hedgerow protection. Linear habitat has been mentioned, and the Government made the introduction of a hedgerows Bill a manifesto commitment. We do not think that leaving it to a private Member's Bill, with all the difficulties associated with it, meets their manifesto commitment or shows proper concern and priority for habitat protection.

We must draw attention to resources. About £3 billion goes into agriculture, about 4 per cent. of which is committed to the habitat directive and 1 per cent. to the agri-environment package. We have no idea how species such as otters, dormice, native pinewoods, orchids and rich grasslands will be protected—an issue of concern to the wildlife trusts.

The concern about monitoring is shared by organisations such as the National Farmers Union, which made points about consultation and made further sensible points about the need for proper resources to conduct monitoring.

We should have liked pond protection to be included in the regulations, as the excellent document of the Council for the Protection of Rural England outlined. But, above all, we believe that the Wildlife and Countryside Act is not adequate. There are problems with protecting SSSIs and with compensation agreements. We would rather see the voluntary principle apply. We recognise that many landowners have an excellent record on habitat protection.

One of my local farmers, Ted Harland, has done tremendous work on his farm to help the environment, and that needs to be recognised, but others have abused the compensation system and obtained millions from the taxpayer without doing much in terms of conservation or habitat protection. Some management agreements are worth more than if the Government had bought the land.

Those are the issues that need to be looked at. I hope that the Minister will give careful consideration to them.

8.43 pm

Mr. Atkins: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) spoke of problems with SSSIs. More than 6,000 SSSIs cover 8 per cent. of Great Britain. Some damage is sometimes inevitable, but in the vast majority of examples the damage is short term and such that the site can recover from it. In 1992-93, for example, there were only 153 cases of recorded damage, and all but a few are expected to recover completely. That represents a loss of 0.001 per cent.—11 hectares out of 858,000 hectares, whatever they are. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but, as I said, I shall do what I can to ensure that we get the information, although I understand that there are some difficulties about that.

I recently paid a visit to the Game Conservancy and was fascinated to learn about the work that it has been doing recently on the effects of set aside and how it can encourage farmers and landowners to reattract birds like the corn bunting, the grey partridge and others. If the hon. Member for Knowsley, North gets an opportunity to go to the Game Conservancy, I recommend that he does so. He will find that it exists not only for those who enjoy hunting but that it conducts much worthwhile work; it is worth a visit.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned peat bogs—a subject dear to my heart. I have some in my constituency, but as a Minister in Northern Ireland I was instrumental in drawing up a document that went a long way to trying to save the remaining few peat bogs in Northern Ireland. As he will know, in the north-west and Lancashire there is a

[Mr. Atkins]

substantial number of bogs and we are pleased that Fisons and English Nature have reached an agreement that will ensure their future.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North and other hon. Members mentioned resources. We are as concerned as they are to ensure that resources are made available, although this must be considered in the context of the public expenditure round. We are proud of the fact that last year resources for agencies increased by 7.6 per cent. I cannot, with my Secretary of State sitting alongside me, guarantee that we shall be able to do the same again, but we intend to do so if we can.

A number of other important issues were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), who I now forgive because I understand the reasons for his raising them, and I promise faithfully that I shall deal with them by writing to all hon. Members because time will not permit me to deal with them at length. My hon. Friend emphasised the importance of the owners and users of some of the areas concerned. I met wildfowlers on the Ribble marshes and know how much they have done to ensure growth of wildfowl in the area. That was admitted by English Nature.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) was entirely right about consultation. There are problems with bats in churches and they should not be underestimated. He will not find me in favour of the anti-hunting stance—

It being one and a half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [15 July].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 13th July, be approved.

Assisted Places

8.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th July, be approved.

As the House will know from debates in previous years, the draft regulations have a specific, straightforward purpose. They simply update the principal regulations, the Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1989. Essentially, they implement the annual uprating of the parental contribution tables, and thus set out the amounts parents must pay towards their child's assisted place at a participating independent school in the coming year. If approved, the amended regulations will come into force on 26 August 1994.

I shall confine my remarks to the effect of this annual uprating. First, regulation 2 increases the allowance made for each dependent child, other than the assisted place holder, against parents' total relevant income when calculating their contribution to school fees. The allowance is raised from £1,125 to £1,140, in line with inflation, and will maintain the help for families with more than one child.

Regulation 3 sets out the income bands used for assessing parents' contributions to fees. Like the dependant's allowance, the bands have been uprated in line with the 1.4 per cent. movement in the retail prices index to October last year.

The income threshold at or below which parents pay nothing towards fees is correspondingly raised from £9,225 to £9,352 a year. There are corresponding increases in the thresholds for the higher income bands. The effect is that parents whose relevant income has risen in line with inflation will continue to contribute the same proportion of that income and, indeed, the same amount in real terms.

I commend the regulations to the House.

8.49 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I thank the Minister for managing to give us that speech, despite the great efforts that he was having to make with his breathing. Obviously, it would not be appropriate to go into that subject now.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) in his seat. A Liberal Democrat press release issued this evening seems to show that the hon. Member for Bath is, for departmental purposes, a non-person. He is described in the press release as a declared presidential candidate.

But there is a total blank as regards the education brief of the Liberal Democrats. There is mention of a home affairs team leader, community and urban affairs, foreign affairs and defence, Europe, Treasury, environment, health and welfare, but nothing about education. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Bath is at least present in person, even if his brief has disappeared off the end of the Liberal Democrat press release.

I shall return to the substantive issue of the assisted places scheme. Tonight's debate gives the Labour party the opportunity once again to make it clear that we believe that the scheme is an ineffective use of taxpayers' money in the education world. While we would not want to disturb the

education of any child currently holding an assisted place, we would phase out the scheme and use the money for better purposes.

At present, it appears that few people know about the existence of the assisted places scheme. An opinion poll that took a sample of more than 2,000 people last autumn showed that only about 40 per cent. knew of the scheme's existence, and even fewer knew exactly how to go about finding out about it.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for bearing with me during my breathless introduction. Is he going to argue that uprating should not be made? He will be aware that the measure is purely and simply to uprate the existing provision, and has nothing to do with the principle. Is he about to argue that he is against the uprating even though the order cannot do away with the regulations and the scheme itself, as he has said he would like to do?

Mr. Griffiths: In his introduction, the Minister mentioned the modest increases this year. We believe that, given the levels of inflation and the unsatisfactory nature of the scheme, it would be as well to leave the scheme as it is, rather than do anything more with it. We will phase out the scheme when given the opportunity.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Many poor children benefit from the scheme. There are many children in my constituency whose families have a low income and who have benefited from and enjoyed the scheme. Some children are well on their way through the scheme and are making good progress in life. Will the Labour party take away that opportunity from poor children? It would be a very spiteful thing to do.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman should realise how few people benefit, in his terms, from the assisted places scheme. There are more than 3 million—almost 3.25 million—pupils in secondary education in this country at present, of which fewer than 30,000 participate in the assisted places scheme. We are talking about less than 1 per cent. of the secondary school population. More than half the parents of those pupils who participate in the scheme went to private schools. The only survey that I know that has been done about the social background of children on the assisted places scheme showed that only 7 per cent. came from families with a manual background.

A large number of families participating in the scheme have below-average incomes—I am not disputing that. But the fact that more than half the pupils who have assisted places have families with professional and managerial backgrounds is more a comment on the very poor rewards given to such people under a Conservative Government. The sum of more than £90 million spent on the assisted places scheme could be better used on improving the educational opportunities of poor children.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman is generous to give way for the second time. I shall not be boring and constantly intervene, but I should remind the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): That will make a change.

Mr. Greenway: I shall certainly remind that boring hon. Gentleman, who is making absurd remarks from a sedentary position and who knows nothing about education —other hon. Members should pay no attention to him—that education is about principles. If we forget that, and argue in awful pragmatic terms, we make no progress in education, and forget children.

Has the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) forgotten the example of Parmiters grammar school in east London—a two-stream grammar school which took 60 children a year? The Labour Government of the day said that the school was wrecking the surrounding 18 comprehensive schools by creaming off 60 children a year, so they closed Parmiters school, which moved to Hertfordshire.

The 60 children a year were distributed among the 18 comprehensives and sank without trace. The opportunity that those children lost has never been regained. If the Labour party is to talk about principles, it should mean what it says.

Mr. Griffiths: I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was Lady Thatcher who closed more grammar schools than any other Secretary of State for Education in history. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman ever allowed such things to happen. What influence did he have at the time all this was happening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I have let the hon. Gentleman respond, just as I allowed the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) to intervene, but this debate is about the uprating of the assisted places scheme. As we have now let off some steam, from now on we must get back to what the order is about.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The order is about increasing the money available for the assisted places scheme, as you rightly say. The Opposition believe that that is not the most effective way of using the money in the education budget; it should be used to give all the children who need help the right start in education.

In 1992-93, the latest date for which we have definitive Department figures, £92.8 million was spent on the scheme. Confirming the increases in the course of his breathless introduction, the Minister did not tell us what the overall cost would be—but I guess that it will amount to many millions of pounds.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I believe I am right in saying that the uprating will not cost anything, because the parents will pay more. The hon. Gentleman is therefore tilting at windmills. He has agreed that the scheme costs £90 million; I understand that the uprating will be borne by the parents.

Mr. Griffiths: No, the uprating means that more money will also be paid out. The figures for the Department for Education are to be found on page 3 of the 1994-95 to 1996-97 Government expenditure plans. The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £95 million, rising the following year to £102 million, then to £106 million and on to £110 million in 1996-97. Thus, more money is indeed to be spent on the scheme.

The money is being spent in schools where the fees range from, on 1992-93 figures, £2,790 to £9,210. Fifty schools are receiving more than £500,000 apiece each year. About 70 schools rely on this income to cover the education of about 20 per cent. of their pupils.

It is interesting to note that, although the Government are spending all this money, there would appear to be either

[Mr. Griffiths]

some mismanagement in the scheme or an underestimate of expenditure on it—or perhaps the schools in question are charging fees that go well beyond inflation. In April this year, we were told that 28,764 pupils participated in the scheme—0.89 per cent. of all secondary school pupils. Yet the departmental report published a month earlier pointed out that the maximum number of places available under the scheme was 33,593. That means that roughly 5,000 available places were not taken up, partly because the funding was apparently exhausted.

Incidentally, these places cost an average £3,236 each. In Wales, that figure is even higher: 691 pupils receive an average of £3,556, from a total of almost £2.5 million. If one compares those figures with the average weighting for school pupils aged between 11 and 16, one will see that it is just £1,554 in state schools. The standard spending assessment, used to calculate education expenditure, is £2,741—considerably less than the amounts made available through the assisted places scheme.

The point about our objection to the continuing increase and the uprating of all aspects of the assisted places scheme is that money is being spent in a way that does not fairly give opportunities to everybody.

Both Her Majesty's inspectorate, when it was monitoring standards in schools, and the Audit Commission, looked exhaustively at the results of the schools that participate in the scheme, as compared with those in the state sector, and found no significant difference. The Minister has come to tell us today that all that uprating is taking place, yet the money is being spent on schools that are no better than those in the state sector, and are costing the taxpayer much more.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): If I understand the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is proposing to oppose an uplift. Does he accept that he is imposing significant hardship on those already participating in the assisted places scheme, and that that is inconsistent with his view—that he wishes to phase it out rather than stop it instantly, because he does not wish to cause hardship to those people? Is there not a distinct inconsistency in his argument?

Mr. Griffiths: No. If the rate of inflation were much higher, there could be arguments about that, but we are talking about what, in essence, is a modest change overall to the scheme. I accept, therefore, that we are not going to cause any significant hardship to the people involved in taking the privilege granted to them by the Government. In the main, it does not go to children from families with a manual background, which was the declared purpose of the scheme when it was first established.

If the Government want to spend money in a more effective fashion, the Department for Education should consult the Home Office and divert enough money into section 11 funding, where it would be of significant use in helping children who have difficulties with the English language to have a good start in life and the education they require.

Mr. Forth: I want to help the hon. Gentleman and the House by putting something into context. The hon. Gentleman used the quaint term "manual occupations" a number of times. Given his background and conditions, I can understand that he might be rather hung up on that, but I offer the House something that is more relevant to the broader view.

Some 60 per cent. of assisted places scheme parents have relevant incomes of less than £13,500 per annum. Some 40 per cent. of parents have incomes below the current threshold of £9,225 per annum, and their children qualify for free assisted places. Therefore, if we can get away from the obsession with manual occupations and just look at income levels, the scheme, I submit, is very successful in helping those with low incomes to get access to an area of education that would otherwise be denied to them.

Mr. Griffiths: I must point out to the Minister that I have already referred to that information—perhaps while he was searching for it. I pointed out that, although only 7 per cent. of the children participating were from families of a manual background, more than 50 per cent. were from families with professional and managerial backgrounds, and more than half the parents had had a private education themselves. Perhaps it was a reflection of the Government's mismanagement of the economy, but they still did not have particularly high wages.

The argument is not about the less than 1 per cent. of secondary schoolchildren who could benefit from the scheme but about whether the money could be better used to help the children of low-income parents. That could be done, but this is not the appropriate debate to deal with that in detail. However, it is about time that the Public Accounts Committee looked to see whether there is any value for money in the scheme and whether the money could be better spent in other areas to help the children of low-income families.

9.10 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I know from my long experience in education that diversity of provision is the fundamental principle by which our children are educated. That must mean schools of every kind—mixed, single-sex, voluntary, grant-maintained, grammar and independent. That is necessary because children are so different, and the measure takes account of those fundamental differences. A child must be suited to an institution. The only logical outcome of the response by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) to the proposals is uniformity of school provision.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The immediate removal of the scheme would have virtually no impact on the vast majority of private schools. Secondly, not all comprehensive schools are the same, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to accept that. There is a huge diversity in comprehensives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that the debate should address the desirability or otherwise of amending the criteria for eligibility for the assisted places scheme. It is not a general debate on education policy. I shall be pretty strict about that.

Mr. Greenway: You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The principle behind the measure is the preservation of a scheme that will be seriously impaired and will perhaps fall if the measure is not passed. If it falls, an important leg of the diverse provision that is required for our children

will be removed. That is the basis of my argument and of my challenge to the hon. Member for Bridgend, who challenged me in an extraordinary way.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): So that the House may understand where the hon. Gentleman's argument is taking us, may I ask whether it is his premise that, if the assisted places scheme were to be scrapped, the independent schoolS sector would also disappear?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My hon. Friend is not suggesting that.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my hon. Friend. She is right: of course I suggested no such thing. I spoke of the assisted places scheme being removed as a result of the challenge mounted by the Labour and Liberal parties, whose spokesmen have given their word that, if either party were elected to government—in my opinion, they never will be again—their policy would be to remove the assisted places scheme.

That would not mean the end of those schools, but poor children would no longer be able to go to them. That is the crucial matter, and it is the business that is before the House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The mix would go. There would be a much narrower range of children able to go to those schools.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is quite right. As I said in an intervention when the hon. Member for Bridgend so generously gave way to me, if we cease to argue principles in terms of education, even if a provision is made available only to a small number of children, we are not arguing education at all.

Let me draw a parallel with the regulations. A small number of children qualify under special needs legislation —I am not digressing, I simply draw a parallel—but if we removed that provision, what damage would be caused to those children?

Mr. Win Griffiths *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Bridgend shakes his head, but fewer children require special needs provision than ultimately take advantage of education under the assisted places scheme. Definition is very important.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I shall give way just once more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman continues down this road, the Chair will not accept it.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the hon. Gentleman for eventually giving way. May I point out that about 2 per cent. of children have statements, which is more than double the number in the assisted places scheme? If we went beyond statemented pupils, we would be talking about a far greater number, and there is no way in which the two should be equated.

Mr. Greenway: I am not going beyond statemented pupils; I am talking about a certain level of statemented pupils. My cut-off point was lower than the number of children on the assisted places scheme.

If we took the 2 per cent. of children in maintained schools who are or who ought to be statemented, we would still be arguing the principle, and if we took away the provision that is required to be made for them, we would damage their education enormously. The same would be true if we took away the special provision for gifted children and very poor children which the assisted places scheme represents.

In education, it is no good speaking simply in pragmatic terms or—I do not say this meanly or rudely—deteriorating to the level of argument that the hon. Gentleman has presented to the House this evening. It is thoroughly unworthy, but it is typical of how the Labour party is arguing about education at present. It is limiting on many levels, and that is why the Labour party is losing, and will continue to lose, the argument on education in Britain at every level.

Who in the end is damaged by the attitude to education of the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party but the poor of the nation? What does the hon. Gentleman stand up and say? He says, "I am here championing the children of blue collar workers.". He is doing the opposite and damaging the children of blue collar workers, and the tragedy is that he does not realise it. [AN HON. MEMBER: "He does realise it.] If he does, it is unforgivable, but if he does not, it is his loss and his own ignorance. I put that to him, and I ask him to wake up.

9.18 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to begin by making an apology. During Education questions last week, I inadvertently and incorrectly attributed to the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), a quotation which appears in column 817 of the *Official Report.* Although I rapidly discovered my error before it was pointed out to me by anybody else, and contacted the Minister's office to apologise, I wish to place on record my apology to the Minister and to withdraw my allegation that he had made such a statement.

I cannot, however, withdraw my opposition to the regulations before us, but I was grateful to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) for attempting to create a level playing field between myself and the Minister.

We all noticed how breathless the Minister was when he delivered his speech, but the hon. Gentleman's reference to a Liberal Democrat press release took my breath away, so the Minister and I are in somewhat similar circumstances this evening.

This is my third opportunity to contribute to debates on these regulations. Both last year and the year before I made it absolutely clear that I did not believe it helpful to view the independent sector as the perpetrator of all that is wrong in our still, sadly, class-ridden society. However, I do not accept that the taxpayers' money that the Government are spending on the independent sector is money well spent. It cannot be right to spend money to ensure that pupils benefit from the supposedly superior education in independent schools when there is no real evidence that that is providing value for money. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) would be especially concerned about that.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that an impressive 90 per cent. of assisted places scheme pupils go on to university or other forms of higher education and that a high success rate—98 per cent.—is achieved at A-level? Does not that represent

[Dr. Robert Spink]

value for money, bearing in mind the fact that the cost for each pupil is £3,405, whereas the cost for a pupil in Tower Hamlets is £4,177? Surely it represents excellent value for money.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because his comments lead me to the next point that I had intended to make.

In our previous two debates, I raised with the Minister my concern about value for money and I asked him to provide evidence that that was being achieved. On both occasions, he provided the very evidence that the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) has cited as evidence of value for money. However, as all hon. Members know, with the assisted places scheme comes a selection procedure that ensures that the pupils who benefit from the scheme are those who, in any case, are the most likely to achieve the sort of results referred to by the hon. Gentleman. As the hon. Member for Bridgend pointed out, there is no evidence from Her Majesty's inspectorate or from Ofsted that the scheme provides value for money in terms of increased educational benefits for those pupils who participate in it.

It cannot be right for money—we will return to the question of specific amounts when the Minister replies—to be used primarily to prop up a number of independent schools that find themselves in increasing difficulties. I am sure that a number of hon. Members will have seen last weekend's article in *The Sunday Times*. It pointed out that a number of independent schools were pegging their fees because they were finding significant difficulty in attracting pupils. They are holding down the fee levels in an attempt to reverse the drift away by parents struggling to pay their bills.

As evidence of that possible connection, it is worth noting that one of the schools mentioned in the article is Dulwich college. That school happened to receive the largest amount of money—£1.3 million—from the assisted places scheme last year. As the hon. Member for Bridgend said, a number of other independent schools also receive a significant proportion of their income from the scheme. For example, at Wisbech grammar school more than 50 per cent. of its pupils are covered by the scheme and at four other schools more than 40 per cent. are covered.

There is some concern about the way the money is being spent and about accountability. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who has left the Chamber, said that she believed that the regulations do not involve any additional money being spent on the scheme. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will confirm how much money is intended to be spent on the scheme in the forthcoming financial year. Indeed, the Minister told us earlier—from a sedentary position—that he was more than happy to confirm that it would be many millions of pounds. How many millions are we talking about? In 1991-92, the scheme was overspent by £10 million.

Answers given by the Minister to parliamentary questions over the past two or three months are very revealing. They demonstrate that the annual cost of the assisted places scheme has doubled over the past six years, to reach the amount—nearly £93 million—referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Bridgend. During that time, the number of pupils benefiting from the scheme has risen by only 6 per cent. I do not think that even the hon. Member for Ealing, North would consider that to be evidence of value for money. Moreover, the cost to the public purse of each assisted place has risen by 40 per cent. in the past five years.

Mr. Forth *rose—*

Mr. Foster: Does the Minister wish to correct my figures?

Mr. Forth: No. I was merely wondering whether the hon. Gentleman had to hand the comparable figures for the maintained sector. I would not mind betting that, if he examined the number of pupils in that sector and the real cost of educating them, he would find a similar escalation. Although he has made an interesting observation, I do not think that the figures that he has cited are grossly out of line with the maintained sector as a whole.

Mr. Foster: That, too, is an interesting point. I shall make the comparison after the debate. The Minister should bear in mind, however, the fact that, if the rate of increase continues—and if he is correct in his prediction that, by 1995, 35,000 assisted places will be available—the total cost to the Exchequer in that financial year will be some £140 million. That will be many millions of pounds indeed, which some would argue could be better spent on other aspects of education.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I have listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman's comments. In the light of what he has said so far, would he care to tell us whether his party's policy would be to close down the assisted places scheme?

Mr. Foster: My party has made it clear that we do not feel able to support the scheme as it is currently organised, and that we would remove it. Like the hon. Member for Bridgend, we have also said that we would remove it in such a way that pupils currently benefiting would not be disadvantaged.

I suspect that the difference between my party and that of the hon. Member for Bridgend is this. My party has no antipathy to the independent schools sector, and has made clear its wish to explore ways in which a far better relationship could be built between it and the state sector. We have mentioned a number of ways in which that is already being done. There are a number of ways in which staff in independent and state schools work, train and develop together, and such action could replace the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: No, I must finish. Other hon. Members wish to speak.

Because of our concern about the lack of evidence of value for money, and about the escalating cost of the scheme—there is no evidence that it is providing real benefit, and it does not help the wider community—we shall not be able to support the regulations.

9.29 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I shall be brief. The debate so far has been shot through with inconsistencies. For example, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) said that his party would not destroy the scheme in a way that would upset the children currently benefiting from it so, clearly, he believes that it does benefit children, or he

would not have used those words. Members of Labour's Front Bench have made it perfectly clear that by opposing the regulations they want to send a clear signal that they intend to destroy first, the assisted places scheme and, secondly, I have no doubt, the independent sector as a whole.

We need to take into account the fact that the cost of the assisted places scheme is very small as a proportion of the total cost of education and that it is trivial compared to the amount of money that the independent sector saves the taxpayer by educating large numbers of children entirely at their parents' expense. In Kent, we believe that we need to do all that we can to preserve variety in education. Kent has fought a long and valiant battle to retain a variety of different kinds of education and schools. It is entirely proper that families of limited income should have made available to them the opportunity, if they so choose, to send their children to a school which they could otherwise not afford.

Mr. Dunn: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, although there may be differences or nuances between the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties in this debate, there is no difference between their offensive behaviour towards freedom of choice and parental choice in Kent?

Mr. Rowe: Sadly, I must confirm that that is so. Whatever the Liberal Democrats may say nationally, what they say in Kent is extremely hostile to that county's choice.

There are many reasons why parents choose to send their children to be educated in the independent sector. It is by no means common for them to believe mindlessly that an independent school is inevitably better than a state school. They might choose to send their children to an independent school because they like its Christian ethos or the fact that it places an emphasis on music, science or has some other distinctive element of its own. If they choose to send their children to such a school, and if there is a limited scheme available to make it possible even though their own means do not extend to it, that is part of the rich diversity of education. It allows for comparisons to be made.

I suggest that the one thing that the Minister should take away from the debate is the clear message that we should think not only about inputs but outputs. We should be sure not only that the children who attend independent schools benefit therefrom—my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) made it clear that a substantial number do—but that the schools which participate in the scheme are the best for the purpose. That cannot necessarily be judged on results alone; it may have to do with the culture at the school and whether it welcomes and sustains children from families of limited means.

I know from personal experience as a schoolmaster and as a pupil at an expensive school that it can be extremely worrying for children to be in a school where virtually every other child comes from a family with an income far greater than his family's. Unless a school takes that on board, welcomes a child and makes the differences in family income unobvious, it can be a damaging rather than a sustaining experience.

Having said that, I believe that the assisted places scheme is valuable. The extraordinarily modest uprating, which is a clear indication of the control which the Government have exercised over inflation, is worth while, and I commend the regulations to the House.

9.35 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I was pleased to be flattered by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) who called me a boy earlier in the debate. It was clearly my youthful good looks and my boyish disposition which made him make such a comment.

Before the House divides on the matter of increasing the amount which we spend on the assisted places scheme, I hope that both of the points that I shall make, if not one of them only, will be widely supported. First, almost £100 million was being spent on the assisted places scheme, sending 28,674 children to independent schools last year. That, by definition, must have created empty spaces in state schools. I put to the House the simple point that it is not only the cost of the assisted place that we shall have to bear, but the cost of the place left behind, empty in a local state school, that the taxpayer will have to underwrite. I hope that the Minister takes that on board.

Mr. Hawkins: How does that square with the Labour party's complaints about overcrowding in classrooms? Surely, if a child benefiting from an assisted place leaves a space behind, that has the benefit of creating a lower class size, of which the hon. Gentleman's Front-Bench spokesmen repeatedly say that they are in favour.

Mr. Jamieson: That is rather a banal point. I am sorry to have to explain to the hon. Gentleman that there is a difference between class size and empty places in schools. Many classes are of well over 30 children and some are of above 40, but other places in classrooms may be available. To save the time of the House, if the hon. Gentleman wants to see me some time later, I could explain it to him in a little more detail.

I hope that the other point that I wish to make receives wide support in the House. The Government have set store by the accountability of schools and that there should be proper accountability of public money—whether a relatively small amount of £100,000 or a substantial amount. Unlike the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) who spoke of small amounts of money, I do not consider £100 million of public money a small amount. I consider that to be a substantial amount of public money. The spending of such money should be properly accountable through the House because the money is directed through the Department of Education and through the Minister.

Mr. Forth *indicated assent.*

Mr. Jamieson: I note that the Minister nods in approval to that.

I shall not rehearse all the arguments for and against the assisted places scheme, as that has been ably done by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). However, I should like to argue for accountability for the amounts of money being spent on the assisted places scheme. If parents choose to send their children to a private or independent school and pay the whole fee themselves, it is their responsibility to undertake to ensure that that money is well spent and that their children are receiving the type of education for which the parents are paying.

I shall not argue with that. It is right and correct. However, if the taxpayer is having to pay a substantial amount of the cost of that education, the taxpayer, or at least the guardians of the taxpayers' money, have a role to

[Mr. Jamieson]

play in ensuring that the way in which that money is expended is accountable through the proper channels of the Government.

The Government have placed great stress on having a four-year cycle of Office for Standards in Education reports for schools, that those reports should be made public and that they should receive public discussion. I have no argument with that. Ofsted reports—Her Majesty's inspectors' reports, as they used to be—should be the subject of proper public debate and should certainly be available to parents. Indeed, they should be available to those who are underwriting and paying for those schools.

There is no obligation for independent schools to have any form of inspection. The Minister will know that, as earlier this year he gave me an answer in which he told me that very few private independent schools had had any form of inspection. For the schools that have had inspections, there is no obligation to make the report public and there is no obligation to send it to parents, as there is in the case of a local education authority or maintained school.

Earlier this year, I brought to the Minister's attention the cases of private independent schools—very few—that had had Ofsted reports. Some of the reports were very good and some were mediocre. I came across some that were exceedingly poor. A constituent who had a child at one of the schools asked the school whether he could have a copy of the Ofsted report that had been made last May. He was told by the school that it was not sending out copies of the Ofsted report.

If that had been a state or local education authority school, the head teacher would be breaking the law if he declined to send out a report. Because this school was a private school which received most of its money from the taxpayer, not through the assisted places scheme, but through a different scheme—the service boarding school allowance—for which the same principle applies, the parent asked for the report and the request was denied. He was told that he could not see the report. My view is that the same rules should apply to private independent schools that benefit from money under the assisted places scheme as apply to state and maintained schools.

Before the Minister considers increasing the amount that will be spent under the scheme—I am not arguing tonight about the rights or wrongs of the scheme—given, as all hon. Members would agree, that substantial amounts of taxpayers' money are being spent on it, will he agree to the following? If a private or independent school receives money from the taxpayer, it should be subject to the same four-year cycle of Ofsted reports as maintained or local education authority schools. Such a report should then be made public so that parents can see it and so that the local public can have an open debate on it. If the Minister agreed to that, he would considerably assist some of the private independent schools and he would certainly help the whole sector. I look forward to his comments on the matter tonight.

9.42 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I must disappoint the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) and tell him that I cannot follow him in his doctrine of the empty place. I found his arguments on that point unpersuasive and almost identical to the arguments that Labour Members advanced in the past against open enrolment and in favour of imposing artificial admission limits on popular schools, thus limiting parental choice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) drew our attention earlier in the debate to the immediate consequence of the House failing to approve the regulations. The consequence would be that parents on modest incomes would find themselves less able to afford the cost of their children's education at schools running the assisted places scheme. It is not difficult, either, to envisage the longer-term consequences of a future Government choosing to abolish the assisted places scheme.

We have, after all, a pretty exact historical precedent. During the 1970s, the blessed Mrs. Shirley Williams abolished the direct grant scheme, the ancestor of the scheme that we are debating today. In practical terms, that meant that, whereas people such as myself had been able to benefit from the educational opportunities offered by council scholarships and the direct grant, other generations of children were not able to benefit in the same way. The schools concerned went down the route of full independence and I believe that that is the route which the schools participating in the assisted places scheme would take were this scheme also to be withdrawn.

The abolition of the assisted places scheme would increase social segregation, not diminish it. I frankly found it astounding to hear yet again the canard from Opposition spokesmen that some independent schools are being propped up by the assisted places scheme. When the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) cited Dulwich college as an example of an ailing school, I began to understand why he had been airbrushed out of his party's press release.

The truth is that the head teachers of the schools taking part in the assisted places scheme are themselves committed to providing an education which rests both on academic excellence and on the enlargement of opportunity for the greatest number of pupils from all backgrounds, regardless of social pedigree, race or religion.

What dismays and genuinely saddens me about the debates that we have each year about the assisted places scheme is that Opposition Members betray what seem to me to be the proudest elements of their own history. There was once a time when the Labour movement was in favour of enlarging opportunities for good education for children from poor areas.

We now see Opposition Members who took advantage of the opportunities of scholarships to public schools, direct grant schools and grammar schools and who, having seized the opportunities for themselves, now want to kick away the ladders so that none of the plebs can climb up behind them. I believe that the scheme is in the interests of education and of equality of opportunity and social diversity in this country.

I shall be glad to support my hon. Friend the Minister this evening.

9.47 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths We have had a very interesting debate about the uprating provided for under the order. I shall repeat one or two of the points which are relevant,

particularly to the remarks of the previous speaker, but also to the difference in approach to the provision of education taken by Members on either side of the House.

On the whole, the Government seem to put forward exclusive schemes in which only a very small minority can participate. I would remind hon. Members once again that fewer than 1 per cent. of children participate in the assisted places scheme. Of that 1 per cent., fewer than 2,500 are from the sort of background to which the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) was pleased to refer in terms of Labour party history.

The Labour party wants to make sure that the opportunities which were previously available to only a few are available to all. After all, the proportion of people who passed the 11-plus depended on the local authority area in which they lived. The proportion might vary tremendously across the country. I was fortunate in being brought up in an area where about half the primary school pupils went on to grammar school. Frankly, the education provided in secondary moderns was nowhere near the same, and the amount of money spent on pupils in either sector was quite different as well.

We want to ensure that money spent on education enlarges the opportunities of 100 per cent. of children and not a mere 1 per cent. That is the difference between the two parties. From the Government, we have scheme after scheme to provide additional funding for small groups—1 per cent. here, 4 per cent. there and 2 per cent. somewhere else. All in all, the schemes encompass fewer than 10 per cent. of all pupils in secondary schools. We want to ensure that all children receive a good-quality education in their local school or, if parents' circumstances decree that they want to look at another school, that they should have that choice.

Let us make no bones about it: as the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) pointed out, there has been a 40 per cent. increase in expenditure on the assisted places scheme in six years, with only a 6 per cent. increase in the number of pupils participating.

One cannot make similar comparisons from the latest Department for Education expenditure plan report. On the figures with which one can make a comparison, however, between 1988-89 and 1992-93 there was a 6 per cent. increase in participation in the assisted places scheme, but its costs increased by about 80 per cent. For voluntary schools in the same period, expenditure increased by 16 per cent and local education authority expenditure on secondary schools increased by 28 per cent. I admit that I have worked that out without a calculator and in rather a hurry. If I were given different figures—

Mr. Don Foster: I gave the calculations.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, I must not forget the contribution of the hon. Member for Bath. We have clearly shown that expenditure on the assisted places scheme goes far beyond that on other sectors of state education.

Once again, we oppose the uprating as a point of principle. We should be giving opportunities not to the few, but to everyone.

9.52 pm

Mr. Forth: You would not want me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be tempted into a debate on the broad principles of the assisted places scheme. This is neither the time nor the occasion to do so. However much I enjoyed my hon. Friends' contributions, especially that of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who dwelt on the theme of diversity of education and reminded the House of the extent to which Conservative Members want to give increasing choice to parents—covering grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges, technical colleges, grammar schools, voluntary-controlled schools and the independent sector—I am sure that you would not want me to dwell on any of that. Nor would you want me to point out that virtually all those schools are under direct threat from the Opposition parties. It would be wrong for me to take up the time of the House in that way.

Equally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would probably look askance if I dwelt excessively on the theme of my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). He pointed out so ably the opportunities that the scheme gives the less privileged, partly as a direct contrast to the perceptions of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), who was obsessed by manual workers. That seems a quaint way of looking at the subject, but it is his way and I respect him for that, of course.

I would not necessarily even want to dwell on the value-for-money argument that my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) outlined. He pointed out, rather succinctly, that it costs much more to educate a pupil in Tower Hamlets than to educate a pupil through the assisted places scheme. None of that is directly relevant to the debate, and I am sure that my hon. Friends would not want me to waste their time by going through those points at length.

What is relevant to the debate is that we are talking about £100 million. Yes, it is a lot of money, but it has to be put in context, as it is £100 million out of a total of £17 billion spent on education. We are introducing a very modest increase, which is tied to the retail price index, as is right at this stage. It allows us to balance the real benefits brought to many pupils and parents, by giving them access to an area of education to which they would not otherwise have access. We have proposed a modest increase to allow that to continue, which will be of great value not only to parents and pupils, but to society because it will provide diversity in education, in which Conservative Members passionately believe.

It is right to say that we should consider outputs and not inputs. That is the theme for the Department for Education and the Secretary of State for Education, and in the maintained sector and beyond. We must ask ourselves how much young people benefit from the assisted places scheme and we are doing so.

Mr. Jamieson: Before the Minister concludes his speech, will he deal with the points that I made to him? If independent schools are so good, what have they to fear from having a four-year Ofsted report that will be made public to parents in particular?

Mr. Forth: At the risk of incurring your wrath, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall say that independent schools have nothing to fear from that. These are matters for Ofsted, an independent department of Government. I am sure that Ofsted will want to move in the direction that the hon. Gentleman suggests. It has nothing to fear and nor have we. In the first place, he should take the matter up directly with Ofsted. We can return to the issues as appropriate, but not in this debate.

Dr. Spink: Bearing in mind the fact that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) took advantage of the independent sector, does not my hon. Friend believe that it is singularly hypocritical of the Opposition to oppose the uprating? Such opposition could deny able children of poor families the opportunity to take advantage of the independent sector.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is right. I hope that before deciding how to vote on this matter hon. Members on both sides of the House will give serious thought to what would happen if we were to deny parents and pupils the modest uprating. They should think of the children who would be denied access to the excellence of the independent sector. That is what is at stake; that is the issue. I hope that hon. Members will whole-heartedly support the regulations.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 160.

Division No. 299] **[9.57 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sidney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Boyes, Roland
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*

Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hution, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 7th July, be approved.

Orders of the Day

LAW OF PROPERTY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

SUMMER TIME

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5)(Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments),

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Summer Time Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 27th June.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

Church of England (Legal Aid)

10.10 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I beg to move,

That the Church of England (Legal Aid) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

As its name suggests, this Measure is concerned with the Church of England's legal aid system. That system is completely separate from the state legal aid system, and its primary purpose is to provide financial assistance, in suitable cases, for the legal costs of clergy and some other ministers in proceedings before Church courts and tribunals that may involve the loss of their office and their ability to exercise their ministry.

This legal aid is funded partly by the central board of finance of the Church of England and partly by the Church Commissioners; but ultimately it is borne by the parishes throughout the country. Although the Church of England's legal aid arrangements are obviously on a fairly small scale, they have not been immune from the serious problem of rising costs which has beset the state legal aid system. At a time when the Church is under particular financial pressure, that has obviously given rise to some concern in C of E circles.

The Measure implements a number of recommendations by the General Synod's legal aid commission, which administers the system, for keeping the costs involved to the minimum consistent with the purpose of the scheme. It seeks to allow the legal aid commission to function as effectively and economically as possible, and to provide the Church of England with the best possible value for the money spent.

At the same time, the Measure has consolidated previous legislation on the subject, so that a great deal of what is before the House tonight is consolidation—it merely repeats the provisions which the House approved as recently as 1988.

One of the legal aid commission's recommendations was that, in future, the Church's system should be confined to its primary purpose, which, as I have already mentioned, involves the possible loss of office. It is obviously important that a member of the clergy facing, say, disciplinary proceedings or major difficulties with his or her parishioners, should be able to come to an independent central body which operates in complete confidence for help with the legal costs involved.

There are, however, some other cases when the commission recommended that any requests for help of this kind should be dealt with locally—for example, by the diocese—in the light of local needs, conditions and circumstances, instead of involving other parishes throughout the country in contributing to the cost.

The Measure therefore removes cases in these limited categories from the centrally funded legal aid system. I hope that it will reassure colleagues to know that the General Synod unanimously accepted this as a fair and reasonable system. Moreover, after detailed scrutiny, our own Ecclesiastical Committee also found it expedient.

Some of the other new provisions in the Measure increase the legal aid commission's administrative powers so that it can function as efficiently as possible. More importantly, it adds to the criteria that previously governed the grant in ecclesiastical legal aid by giving the commission an express power and duty to take all the circumstances of each case into account.

As the point was raised by an hon. Member in a debate here in 1988, I should mention the provision under which, when the commission is considering the financial resources of an applicant for legal aid, it must have regard to the resources of the applicant's spouse. That does not, and never did, require it to aggregate the spouse's capital and income automatically with the applicant's, as happens in some cases under the state legal aid system.

In contrast to the rigid secular provision, by requiring the commission to take all the circumstances into account, the new Measure gives it an increased discretion and greater flexibility, both in that and other cases, to do what is fair and proper in a particular case. Again, the Ecclesiastical Committee, after detailed examination of what was proposed, was satisfied that it was expedient.

The changes embodied in the Measure are limited in scope and, as I have already said, the General Synod gave final approval to them without a single dissenting vote. They will help to rationalise the Church of England's legal aid system, and to use the limited resources that the church has available for that system to best advantage.

I urge hon. Members to support the Measure.

10.16 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall resist the temptation to make a very long speech, and merely offer the House one of moderate length.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) explained the provisions of the Measure perfectly clearly. He pointed out that it is largely a consolidation Measure, but that it points the way to improvements in the arrangements. I hope that the House will agree with his assessment that it is a modest but desirable Measure.

One must understand that, in the latter years of the 20th centure, the clergy are not well paid. Indeed, some right hon. or hon. Members, particularly those with substantial outside interests, would find it unimaginable that people should exist on the pay that our clergy receive. At the same time, the clergy are at the focal point in the exercise of their pastoral responsibilities, with much of the anguish and ordeals to which many ordinary people are subjected.

The pressure on them in many parishes may be such as to test their faith, and some, whose faith may be less strong or over-tested, may be in difficulty. It is only right that they should be regarded as the casualties of the sort of society that we in Britain face today.

I hope that the House will understand that those who are in that position deserve justice. They certainly should not be in a position in which great difficulty can be placed on them simply because they lack the resources to secure professional representation. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will view the Measure with much sympathy.

The right hon. Gentleman explained that the matter was considered quite exhaustively in the Ecclesiastical Committee. I do not belive it appropriate to labour the point any further, and I join the right hon. Gentleman in commending the Measure to the House.

10.18 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I shall make a few brief comments on the Measure, because some quite serious questions still need to be answered. They particularly surround the financing of the additional fund. Clause 1 of the Measure says:

"The General Synod shall continue to maintain the Legal Aid Fund to which the General Synod and the Church Commissioners may contribute sums as each shall from time to time may decide."

That is an important point, because, as many hon. Members know, there are currently considerable difficulties over the financing of the Church Commissioners. It is widely reported that they have suffered considerable losses in the property market. That is regrettable, but it makes one wonder about their ability to make such a contribution when they are in such dire straits over funds.

I accept the point about the ability and wealth of the clergy, and I certainly accept that stipends are not generous. According to my most recent calculations, stipends are in the region of £12,000 to £12,500 a year. That is not generous, but one must consider the other so-called perks of the job, which may often include property. For most people, mortgage payments are a significant part of their outgoings, and to have £12,000 or £12,500 left over after a property is paid for is a considerable achievement.

In the context of legal aid, many clergy may also have funds made available for vehicles. Motor vehicles are often provided by the parish and form another important contribution to the overall income of many households. How would the rules apply to households containing two members of the clergy? In such cases, there are obviously two incomes, and the house is provided at some expense to the local diocese.

Another aspect of legal aid funding relates to the notion that the Church Commissioners should contribute. I accept that the clergy are as eligible for legal aid and advice as anybody else—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members should listen in silence to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), or hold conversations outside. *[Hon. Members:* "It is boring."] Order. Those who find it boring can go outside.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House will be aware of my long interest in this issue, and my detailed concern about the Measure, which I have often expressed privately and now have the opportunity to express publicly. I have a right to do that.

The legal aid system has increased tenfold since 1979, and is available to the clergy. I accept that there are income constraints on the fund, but why should the clergy be exempt from the rules that apply to their parishioners? Surely the clergy provide a service for their parishioners and should not enjoy a better set of rules than they do.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify for my benefit, and right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) could intervene to define, the categories for legal aid among the clergy, because they form a diverse group and many have their own resources. That was always part of the calling of the Church. To what part of the Measure is my hon. Friend referring?

Mr. Bates: With respect, I do not wish to stray from the narrow point I was discussing, and I shall leave that question to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby.

We are talking about using funds for legal aid purposes. The Church Commissioners' report drew attention to the total assets of the Church Commissioners. It is relevant to the debate, because it will support the legal aid fund that we are debating. That fund was estimated to be about £2.2 billion. About half that money was in equities.

According to the Church Commissioners' report, which I read with considerable interest, the income derived from that was about £167 million. We need to put down a marker. Will a maximum apply to claims from the legal aid fund? Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby will refer to that in winding up.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is my hon. Friend aware that, as stipends are falling under the current adverse circumstances of the Church Commissioners, a greater burden will fall on the congregations to make them up? As congregations are also falling, stipends will fall and a greater burden will fall on the legal aid fund. How does my hon. Friend propose to deal with that?

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The financing is all tied up with the legal aid Measure; we cannot divorce the two. We cannot talk about provision for a legal aid fund, but not the fund which will provide for it.

My hon. Friend rightly refers to the stipend. My local Church of England church was advised that a new measure was to be introduced to tackle the underfunding and shortfall in the Commissioners' coffers. It was to require all members of the Church of England—of whom I proudly declare myself one—to double their contributions. Given the evangelical nature of the Church, perhaps the best incentive for the clergy would be for the contributions to remain the same, but for the clergy to try to double their congregations. Perhaps that would have been a better way of approaching that financial problem.

I return to the Church Commissioners' fund. The fund has an income about of about £167 million. I was surprised to read about the amount of money that was contributed to the Church of England urban fund, which does a great deal of valuable work in our inner cities. In past years, it has been £25,000. That is not a staggering sum when one considers it alongside £2.2 billion in assets and £167 million in income.

Following adverse investment performance, the Church Commissioners decided not to cut the stipends of the clergy, but rather to cut the contributions to the urban fund. It was quite an abhorrent decision to cut help to those who are most needy, and certainly in far greater need than one would suggest of the clergy. We ought to examine the amount contributed to that fund.

If the Church Commissioners are providing legal aid protection in addition to the generous scheme which already applies, people will want to know what contribution will be made this year to the urban fund.

Just as the Church rightly chides the Government and urges them to reconsider their contribution to the inner cities, so from time to time this House may deem it right to examine the way in which the Church Commissioners handle their finances. I know that that point will be accepted in the spirit in which it was made.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend is knowledgeable in these matters, so I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Taylor: I am not sure that I am knowledgeable, which is why I seek guidance from my hon. Friend. Is he saying that the Church of England urban fund has some bearing on the qualification for legal aid? I should have thought it to be an extraneous fund and therefore not linked, but perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify the matter in greater detail.

Mr. Bates: I shall explain the position as concisely as I can. The urban fund is relevant. I am making the point that the budget from the Church of England general fund —the Church Commissioners' budget—to help inner cities and the poorest in our community has been cut.

Where will the money come from to fund an extra level of legal aid when apparently money was not available to help the inner cities? Is there any limit on the areas under which people can apply for legal aid funding? What are the restrictions? Those are a few genuine points that need to be considered.

Dr. Spink: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to me again—it is extremely good of him. Will he consider a hypothetical situation? Father Michael is the parish priest of St. Mary the Virgin in my constituency. That church is celebrating its 1,100th anniversary. Were Father Michael to have an accident in the street outside his church and need to make use of the legal aid fund, would the measure before us place him at any disadvantage?

Mr. Bates: With all due respect to my hon. Friend, I do not think that that case would apply, because most churches have, or should have, public and employer liability insurances. In the unfortunate circumstances that my hon. Friend described, the right action would be to claim against the church's insurance.

Dr. Spink: I am sure that Father Michael will be delighted to hear that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend takes these matters very seriously, as I do. I am sure that my advice was genuinely sought and that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, accept that it was genuinely offered.

My points focus directly on the amount of the legal aid fund and the circumstances in which aid will be given. I have questioned whether the priority for the Church of England—this is all about setting priorities for the finite amount of cash available—should be to provide additional legal aid protection for the clergy. Many people may feel that, although their salaries are not huge, they are adequate, and there are additional benefits. Therefore, would not the money be better spent on the inner cities, through the Church urban fund, or even on missionary work overseas?

Those are genuine questions. We must get this matter right, because people look at the palaces in which many of our archbishops live in some comfort and with very adequate accommodation. I think especially of the Bishop of Durham's palace at Auckland castle, which is quite a generous provision. I think also of Bishopsthorpe in York.

I have asked genuine questions, and I hope that I will receive answers to them.

10.34 pm

Mr. Alison: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I welcome the helpful and positive response to the Measure that we heard from the official Opposition spokesman on Church of England affairs, the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). I know that he is as gratified as I am to note the interest and support indicated by tonight's substantial turnout. I hope that if, by some infernal machination, a Division is called—heaven forbid —the hon. Gentleman will act as both shepherd and Whip, and will guide his flock unfailingly into the Aye Lobby to support the Measure that he has so eloquently endorsed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) hit on an important point when he mentioned clause 1 of the Measure, which refers to the contribution that the General Synod and the Church Commissioners—he made particular mention of the latter—may make to our legal aid fund. I am grateful for his sensitive and responsible concern about the Church of England's finances.

As he said, the Church is not as flush as it might be; he will understand, however, that the long stop is the ordinary man and woman in the parish—the regular churchgoer—who currently puts about £2.50 a week into the collection plate, but could easily contribute a bit more if he or she thought that it was needed.

As soon as we present such people with that need, they will divert some of their giving from good charities such as Oxfam and Christian Aid in favour of the Church. Potentially, we have a considerable resource. I should add that the Church Commissioners have no legal duty to contribute to the Church's legal aid fund; they do so purely in a spirit of co-operation, helpfulness and constructive support for its needs.

The purpose of the Measure—in so far as it goes beyond being a consolidation measure—is pinpointed in the Legislative Committee's report, which can be found on page 4 of the Ecclesiastical Committee's report. My hon. Friend will note that the changes that we are making were prompted by

"a particular case, involving a clergyman against whom disciplinary proceedings were taken under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963, which resulted in heavy expenditure, both from the Fund and from other sources".

A single item of expenditure involved a six-figure cost. I think that that will demonstrate to my hon. Friend how concerned we were, and are, about the potential liabilities of the legal aid fund.

It is for precisely that reason that the Measure seeks to introduce refinements and improvements. Paragraph 7(c) of the Ecclesiastical Committee's report gives details of the proposed retrenchment, and explains that certain categories who have been able to draw support from the fund will henceforth be disqualified. We need to save money because of rising costs. We are trying hard to husband money, which is clearly what my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh wants us to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) asked whether we were refining the scope of the Measure, and looking seriously at the costs involved. Who would be eligible for help?

Let me repeat the summary that I gave in my introductory speech. Essentially, the aim of the legal aid fund is to provide financial assistance in cases of proceedings before Church courts and tribunals that may involve defendants' loss of office and ability to exercise

their ministry—that is, they may be chucked out of their parishes. If my hon. Friend wants the full technical scope, the list of applicants who may or may not be eligible for assistance is set out in schedule 4 to the Measure.

With those summary comments and the support of my hon. Friends, in great appreciation of the support of the hon. Member for Wentworth and in confident expectation that, in view of the many hon. Members who have stayed behind tonight, there will be a substantial vote in favour of the Measure if, which I hope is not the case, it is pressed to a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Church of England (Legal Aid) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

PRIVILEGES

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Attorney General, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Tony Benn, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Bill Michie, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. John Morris, Mr. Tony Newton, Sir Cranley Onslow, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Peter Shore, Sir James Spicer, Mr. John Ward and Mr. Alan Williams be members of the Committee of Privileges.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Hon Members: Object.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Page 18 of "Erskine May" refers to the salary paid to the Leader of the Opposition, being the sum of £49,207. From what date will that payment come into force, and will the Opposition make a statement about the date on which the Leader of the Opposition will be appointed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The hon. Gentleman seems to have been raising bogus points of order most of the day. That is not a matter for the Chair.

PETITIONS

Orsett Hospital

10.41 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): It is my privilege to present a petition signed by the mayor of Thurrock, Councillor Barry Palmer, by the leader of Thurrock council, Councillor Jimmy Aberdein, by Councillor Beverly Barton, the vice-chairman of Essex county council and more than 40,000 residents of the borough of Thurrock. It reads:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the citizens of the United Kingdom sheweth

That the people of Thurrock have already been substantially disadvantaged by the closure of the accident and emergency department at Orsett hospital and that this was carried out despite the views of the overwhelming majority of the borough's citizens.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House request the Secretary of State for Health to reassure the citizens of Thurrock by interceding with the regional and local health authorities and the Basildon and Thurrock hospital trust to ensure that they continue to maintain and improve the facilities at Orsett hospital by reaffirming their commitment to this much valued health facility.

The petition has been signed by some 40,000 residents.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Before the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) presents her petition, may I say that it is not necessary to go to the Bar of the House; hon. Members can go directly behind the Chair.

Hospitals (Sheffield)

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): That saves me a little walk, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have the privilege to present a petition signed by 24,000 residents of my and other Sheffield constituencies to protest against the threatened closure of children's wards at the Northern General hospital.

It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the users and potential users of the existing paediatric provisions in Sheffield and its environs showeth the continuing need for the retention of existing children's wards at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield.

That the consultation proposals for the closure of those wards by the Sheffield Health Authority and the Sheffield Family Health Services Authority are not in accord with the wishes and the needs of the specific area.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Health to maintain the current children's wards at this hospital. And your petitioners, as in duty, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

10.45 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): It gives me great pleasure, and anger at the same time, to present a petition, containing 4,773 signatures. That may not sound many, but it is in addition to the 40,000 signatures already presented to the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing street. Those signatures were sent to every Sheffield Member of Parliament; the hon. Members for Hallam (Mr. Patnick), for Central (Mr. Caborn), for Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), for Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), for Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Therefore, I shall present the petition, which says:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petitioners of the users and the potential users of the existing accident and emergency provisions in Sheffield and its environs showeth that the continuing need for the retention of the existing accident and emergency provision in full at the Royal Hallamshire and the Northern General hospitals in Sheffield.

That the consultation proposals for the closure of one of the units by the Sheffield Health Authority and the Sheffield Family Health Services Authority are not in accord with the wishes and the needs of the specified area;

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Health to maintain the current accident and emergency services in Sheffield and its environs. And your petitioners, as in duty, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Prostitution

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.47 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I have sought this debate on behalf of my constituents who live in what should be a pleasant residential area, but which for decades has been blighted and unjustifiably stigmatised as a result of the nuisance and disturbance associated with street prostitution and, latterly, window prostitution. The area is on the edge of my constituency and also includes part of the constituencies of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who have been notified about the debate.

My concerns are not specifically directed against the concept of sex for sale, however distasteful that concept may appear. It could be argued that prostitutes provide a valuable service. Over the past couple of years, I have taken every opportunity to talk with my constituents, with residents in so-called red light districts in other parts of the country, with prostitutes working on the streets from windows and massage parlours, as well as with the police and other agencies—health workers, academics and so on.

I have come to the conclusion that we must accept that prostitution is, unfortunately, here to stay. Perhaps we would therefore do best to accept that the law should have no role to play in what is, in effect, a commercial transaction between service provider and customer. The law does, however, have a role to play in controlling the harmful social and environmental consequences of prostitution, which is what I want to discuss today.

Last summer, a resident wrote an open letter to me, which was published in the local community magazine. He said:

"I know that I'm living in what others call a Red Light district. I have no moral problems with this having spent 3 years in Amsterdam, but it's the disturbances it brings to my children's way of life and my own which concern me.

Until two weeks ago when police launched a special initiative to control the volume of traffic in the area I was forced to sleep downstairs to protect my children from men knocking on my front door and shouting abuse at the windows. And that's sometimes as early as 7 o'clock on Sunday mornings. You see we are forced to keep the same hours as the prostitutes. Rest comes at about 3 am.

Living on this road, its assumed we're another 'working house' and we're on view to the sightseers and kerb crawlers as much as the 'women in the windows'. My kids have been forced to get used to people prying into our windows, looking through the gaps in the curtains, or putting faces and hands through the letterbox. Mistaken identities are an everyday hazard if you live here. People in the streets think I'm a pimp and my daughter has been propositioned—and she's only 10.

My kids are streetwise—they have to be to survive in this area. They pass drug dealers, prostitutes, and pimps every day they walk to school. Kids can't play normally here . . . I'm not against the individual women—it's their choice of living, but as a resident I'm fed up with the disturbance it causes. You're denied a social life. If I bring a girlfriend to my house, people assume she's a prostitute or she feels uncomfortable with a vice patrol van outside."

Another resident, Mr. Khan, wrote to me:

"They have spoiled our livelihood. We have worked hard to buy our houses. At that time, the situation was not as bad as it is now. Residents are being intimidated, harassed and abused. The police have done what they can, but their hands are tied."

Significantly, he adds:

"We do not just want to clean up our streets but also ask politicians to find a permanent solution for the prostitutes."

An officer of one of the local residents associations has told me that people are desperate to find a solution. Police powers and effectiveness are limited by the terms of current legislation. He asks us to explore ways in which to provide more effective legislation to rid not only that area but all residential areas of the problems of street prostitution.

There is no doubt that from a resident's perspective prostitution creates a poor environmental image and attracts a high volume of traffic, not just from kerb-crawling clients, but from sightseers. There is often noise into the early hours of the morning and litter of the ordinary type plus used condoms and tissues. An atmosphere of fear is created for female residents and children. There is also no doubt that the current legal framework is ineffective in dealing with residents' concerns. My constituents recognise that, but the Government do not.

In January 1993, I tabled a parliamentary question asking the Home Secretary what plans he had to review the laws on prostitution. The then Home Office Minister responded in the following terms:

"We consider that the criminal law is well placed to deal with the nuisance caused by prostitution and have no present plans to review the law in this area."—*[Official Report,* 11 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. *597.]*

And they have not.

Given the continuing nuisance to residents that I have just described, does not that response show how out of touch the Government are with the realities of life? Yes, there are laws against prostitutes soliciting and against kerb crawling, but those are effective only when the police mount high-profile clamp-downs which they cannot keep up for long because of the high cost in police resources. I am advised that the West Midlands police spend about £500,000 policing this area in Balsall Heath. In 1993, 724 women were arrested for prostitution, 147 were cautioned, there were 127 summonses for kerb crawling and 528 letters were sent to men cruising in their cars. Still the nuisance remains.

The only aspect of the law that the Government show any inclination to reform is the persistence requirement in section 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 1985. That might make it slightly easier to nail a kerb crawler but, as the figures show, that is being done anyway with little impact on the problem. In fact, the need to show persistence can be avoided by the use of the nuisance provision in section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act, following from the case of Director of Public Prosecutions *v.* Paul in 1989. Section 115 of the Police and Magistrates Courts Act 1980 can be used against cruising kerb crawling, and there are also provisions in section 5 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act which can be used against nuisance.

A review by Inspector Robert Golding of Hampshire constabulary—which covers Southampton—shows that an array of laws can be used against kerb crawlers and prostitution, but only if the police are present on a more or less permanent basis.

Residents know that the current laws of themselves do not work. That is why, in Balsall Heath, they have taken their own action to highlight the problems. For the past four weeks, groups of residents have positioned themselves on every street corner where prostitutes used to ply their trade. This involved hundreds of local people who were there from mid-morning until the early hours. They are still

there when I pass through on my way home from this place in the early hours of Friday morning and I have stopped to talk to them on those and other occasions.

They say to me, "Why should we have to do this to make our streets pleasant to live in? What are the politicians and the Government going to do to find a permanent solution?" They are realistic enough to realise that, just like the police, they cannot keep that level of activity up for ever—and even if they could, the problem would only move to other areas.

While they would like to believe that arrests and prosecutions will solve the problem, they know from experience that the current system of arresting prostitutes, fining them and turning them back on to the streets to pay off their fines only perpetuates the problem. There is even a recognition that current policing practices exacerbates potential sexually transmitted diseases and health risks.

The Balsall Heath residents' action group says that prostitution cannot be eradicated, but that it can be controlled and managed so as to reduce medical problems and impose as little strain as possible on local people. They understand that there is a strong economic base to prostitution. Few women choose it as a profession but, having entered, the incentive is strong to remain in it. They have called for the establishment of "zones of tolerance" where prostitution is legal. Their call was echoed by the whole community and by politicians of all political parties at a public meeting tonight.

I do not say that that is necessarily the whole answer, but it is one idea which should perhaps be tried. One thing is for sure—it would require a change in the law. Is it not now time for a radical review of the legislation to provide a legal framework which will allow prostitutes to advertise their services and meet clients in a manner which does not cause nuisance or offence, reduces the exploitation of women by those who wish to live off their earnings and encourages responsible behaviour in the prevention of sexually transmitted disease?

Time and again it has been shown that attempts to bring criminal law enforcement into sexual disease control has not been at all effective. An editorial in an issue of the *British Medical Journal* last November said that the decriminalisation of prostitution would enable prostitutes to organise and exercise more control over clients, and would promote the provision of health care. That is the view of health workers operating in Balsall Heath and other areas.

I therefore return to the point that I made at the beginning of my speech. We should perhaps view prostitution merely as a service which should be tolerated, provided that it does not cause nuisance. The logical action would then be to remove the laws which prevent prostitutes from advertising their services and which make it illegal for them to work discreetly in small groups for their own safety and security. That is what prostitutes themselves want, and that is what a growing number, people—including many police officers, and even a representative from the Mothers' Union who participated in a radio debate with me this morning—see as a solution. Is it not time the Government caught up with public opinion and really got to grips with tackling the problem?

10.59 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I am grateful to have the opportunity to respond to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones), because she has raised an interesting subject.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) has followed the debate closely. He informed me of the difficulties and concerns that he has in his constituency, especially in the Chapeltown district of Leeds.

I shall begin by explaining the function and powers of the criminal law, in relation to prostitution. Then I shall talk a little of the role of the police, both generally and in the hon. Member's constituency.

Under our law, prostitution is not an illegal activity. A woman—or even a man—may sell sexual services, as long as the activities are not unlawful. The Government nevertheless recognise that prostitution can be the origin of a very serious nuisance to members of the public. It also often involves the exploitation of vulnerable members of the community, so a wide range of sanctions are available to deal with the criminal activities that tend to accompany prostitution. The Government believe that the law is already adequate to deal with the vast majority of criminal activity.

The criminal law has two main aims: first, to prevent the serious nuisance to the public caused when prostitutes ply their trade in the streets; and, secondly, to prevent and to penalise those who encourage, control or exploit the prostitution of others.

So far as nuisance in the street is concerned, the Street Offences Act 1959 makes it an offence for a woman to loiter or solicit in a street, or other public place, for the purposes of prostitution. That is punishable by a maximum fine of £500 for a first offence, and of £1,000 for subsequent offences. The 1959 Act also confers on a constable the power to arrest, without warrant, anyone he finds in a street or public place and suspects, with reasonable cause, of committing such an offence.

The Sexual Offences Act 1985 provides other important provisions to tackle street prostitution. The Act made it an offence persistently to solicit a woman for prostitution in a public place, and it made kerb crawling an offence. Offences under the Act are punishable by a maximum fine of £1,000. That was an example of the Government keeping in touch with public opinion and concern, and moving to change the law in 1985 to deal with that new manifestation of a public nuisance.

Although the hon. Member is especially concerned with the nuisance caused by prostitution, the criminal law has another aim in that area—to deal with those who seek to encourage or exploit prostitution. That is the heart of the matter and where the real wickedness lies, so under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, it is an offence punishable by a maximum of seven years' imprisonment to live off the earnings of another person's prostitution, or to control a prostitute. It is also an offence punishable by two years' imprisonment to procure a woman with threats, or to encourage or cause a girl under 16 to be a prostitute. A number of offences relating to brothel keeping carry a maximum of six months' imprisonment.

I have set out the powers available under the criminal law. It is the Government's job to ensure that those powers are sufficient to enable the prosecuting authorities to deal effectively with the problem.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Is it not a fact that, in 1991, 79 convictions were brought against people living on the earnings of prostitution? There were similarly very few prosecutions for the other offences that the Minister mentioned, when compared with the number of prosecutions of prostitutes. The laws clearly exist, but they are not having an effect and dealing with the problem.

Mr. Maclean: I disagree. The hon. Lady cites the number of prosecutions, but she did not cite the penalties applicable in each case. It stands to reason that there are fewer prosecutions against those controlling prostitutes, as there are fewer people at that end of the trade than there are plying the streets. One pimp could control quite a few prostitutes. It is inevitable that there will be more prosecutions against those who are out creating the nuisance on the streets.

Nevertheless, I support police action against those people who are living off immoral earnings, or are controlling and keeping prostitutes, because that is often where the real evil lies, and where one sees appalling violence and exploitation. If those people are legitimately harassed by the police and rounded up and prosecuted, we are getting a good service that serves, in any case, to diminish the amount of prostitution.

The police resources dedicated to preventing and prosecuting those people involved in prostitution are a matter for each individual chief constable. It is not a matter of the Government dictating priorities to chief constables around the country on the level of resources that they should allocate to deal with prostitution in their area. Each chief constable must decide on his force's operational priorities and objectives and, of course, he needs to take local needs into account.

The commitment of the West Midlands police to enforcing the law against prostitution cannot be doubted, and it can be seen clearly from the number of persons arrested and charged with offences. In 1993, about 1,900 people were prosecuted for prostitution and a further 193 people were prosecuted for kerb crawling.

Police action is directed towards reducing the number of prostitutes and kerb crawlers by increasing police patrols in the worst affected areas. That tactic is having some success in Balsall Heath, where previously a survey had revealed that on average 2,000 vehicles a day were being driven by kerb crawlers into a small cul de sac. Another campaign of the same sort has been launched in the Edgbaston area following consultation between the police and local residents.

Elsewhere in the country, the police are having most success where they work in close partnership with local authorities and other agencies to "design out" crime. In the King's Cross area of London, for example, local authorities follow up police action with environmental changes, such as improvements in street lighting and traffic management, to make the area unattractive to prostitutes and their clients. One-way streets and road closures have made it difficult for prospective kerb crawlers to operate. That has created an increased sense of safety and pride in the community.

It is, of course, not unusual in a case where the police, for whatever reason, have not dealt with a matter to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, to hear calls for changes in the law. We have had calls to toughen up the laws on prostitution and to increase the powers of courts and police; however, we have also had calls to liberalise the law and to allow licensed brothels or toleration zones where prostitutes can operate away from residential areas without interference from the law. The police, however, have shown that it is possible to tackle the problems caused by prostitution in residential areas. It must be a determined, collaborative effort with the local community, but it can be done.

Toleration zones would mean that the criminal law would be disapplied in a particular area. We would pretend that the criminal law did not exist. We have no intention of legalising activities surrounding prostitution, either as a matter of general application or in specific geographical areas. The concept of toleration zones, where one turns a blind eye to breaches of the law, sets a dangerous precedent for the criminal law. Although it could possibly and theoretically deal with the nuisance problem, it would not deal with the evil aspect of prostitution: vicious pimps controlling prostitutes; in fact, it would make that aspect of the problem much worse.

If we accepted toleration zones, we would give a free licence to all those people who live off immoral earnings and control and abuse prostitutes to continue their evil work not only unabated but with Government encouragement. That is not right.

As for kerb crawling, the Government have made it clear that we consider that the need to prove persistence, nuisance or annoyance on the part of a kerb crawler is a difficult and unnecessary barrier to the effective operation of the powers. That requirement was originally incorporated into the legislation because Parliament was concerned that innocent people would otherwise be prosecuted. We now consider that those fears were excessive, and that it would be worth while tightening up the law by removing the need to prove persistence.

A private Member's Bill to achieve just that was introduced, with full Government support, in 1990. Unfortunately, a small group of Members of Parliament —notably the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)—deliberately prolonged the debate beyond the point where the measure could reach the statute book. We have since made a commitment to reintroduce the measure as soon as a suitable legislative vehicle can be found. If the hon. Lady is successful in the next ballot for private Members' Bills, I hope that she will introduce the measure, and that she will prevail on the hon. Member for Brent, East not to block it.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Does the Minister really think that that is an answer to the problem? Police officers to whom I have spoken have told me that they are perfectly able to use the present array of laws to deal with kerb crawling, but that they have to be present all the time to implement them.

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Lady called for new Government action, but there is already adequate criminal law to deal with the problems of prostitution and we have proposed a small change that we believe would help to tackle kerb crawling. There is no magic panacea that the Government can adopt, thereby introducing new powers, making changes or turning a blind eye to the evils of controlling prostitutes as an experiment with toleration zones. I suggest that that would be a damaging experiment to try. Many vulnerable women would suffer abominably if the Government and police decided to turn a blind eye and to permit toleration zones.

I suggest that the existing laws to deal with the problem are adequate, and it is for local police forces to enforce them according to priorities in local areas. The law works best where legal action is coupled with action by local authorities to design out aspects of the local environment that might encourage prostitution. We have seen some notable successes in the country; there are some good examples that other local authorities should emulate. I commend that action to the hon. Lady, rather than dangerous experiments that have a simplistic appeal but have not been fully thought through.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER NOTTINGHAM LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT BILL

Ordered,

That in the case of the Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Bill, Standing Order 208 (Notice of Consideration of Lords Amendments) be suspended and that the Lords Amendments be now considered.—[*The Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

Lords amendments accordingly considered

Clause 57

NOISE INSULATION

Lords amendment: No. 88, in page 44, line 26, at end insert—

"(c) The following provisions of this section are without prejudice to this subsection".

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: after "subsection" insert—

"and in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, an application for a grant to which provision is required to be made by this subsection shall not be invalid by reason of the fact that it is not made on the date specified in accordance with subsection (4)(d) below if it is made during a period beginning with the opening to the public of the part of the LRT system to which the application relates and ending five years thereafter".

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development

1. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the work of the regional development organisations.

17. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the work of the regional development organisations.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr Heseltine): The regional development organisations make a significant contribution to the overall success of the United Kingdom in attracting inward investment. In 1992-93, the last year for which figures are available, they were significantly involved in attracting 54 investment projects by foreign firms to the United Kingdom, involving some 6,000 jobs. The work of the regional development organisations will be further strengthened by my recent appointment of a senior business man as head of the Invest in Britain Bureau.

Mr. Bates: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he join me in thanking the Northern Development Company in particular, which has succeeded in attracting some £3.5 billion-worth of inward investment to the north-east, creating or safeguarding some 35,000 jobs? Will he compare its successful efforts at industrial regeneration with the record of the National Enterprise Board, which made 100 investments, 35 of which went bust and 37 were sold at a loss to the taxpayer?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is wise to remind the House of the disastrous experience of the National Enterprise Board, but he is also right to point out that the north-east has been particularly successful in attracting inward investment to this country, a significant amount of which I have had the privilege of seeing.

Mrs. Lait: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the north-east shares with areas in the south-east the problem of endemic long-term unemployment. When he considers the regional development map in due course, will he bear in mind the fact that the causes of that regional endemic unemployment will not have been solved because we will not have the new roads? Will he ensure that the Department is generous in the timing of a new map?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. We are obliged to review the map from time to time and we will do so, but against a statistically accurate background. I know that my hon. Friend will share my pleasure at seeing the overall levels of unemployment now falling consistently month by month.

Mr. Wigley: Does the President of the Board accept that, despite the recent difficulties of the Welsh Development Agency, in the period from 1976 until now it has performed a remarkable job? It now needs every support, not only from the Welsh Office but from the Minister's Department and the Treasury, to maximise inward investment into Wales and the UK generally and to help self-regenerative growth within the area?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is right to point to the great success that the Welsh Development Agency has had, but he will remember that it has enjoyed that success against the background of fiscal policies that have made this country extremely attractive to inward investment. The most constructive thing that he and his party could do is support the Government's determination to avoid the on-costs of the social chapter, which would undermine Welsh competitiveness.

Mr. Gunnell: Will the President of the Board of Trade acknowledge the good work done by the Yorkshire and Humberside development corporation, particularly in south Humberside, where he will recall opening the Kimberly-Clark plant? Will he guarantee that, whatever boundary changes the local government review comes up with, the Yorkshire and Humberside development corporation will still have responsibility for attracting inward investment to south Humberside and Scunthorpe, where it has had so many successes?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out the considerable success that Government policy has had in attracting inward investment to this country. I assure him that we will continue with those policies. Indeed, we are increasing our efforts to support them.

Mr. Streeter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the number of overseas companies that have decided in the past six months to invest in Devon and Cornwall has risen sharply compared to previous years, thanks largely to the efforts of the Devon and Cornwall development bureau? Does he agree, however, that that is not just a reflection of growing confidence in the UK economy but a new recognition that the south-west, with its skilled work force and improving communications, is now firmly open for business?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes a remarkable and eloquent point on behalf of the south-west. I have visited his part of the country recently. The transformation that has taken place since I was last a Member of Parliament for that area is remarkable.

Mr. Beggs: The President of the Board of Trade will be aware of the excellent work done by Scottish Enterprise. Recently, jointly with a constituent of mine in manufacturing, it had identified major possible small hydro projects in Vietnam. Unfortunately, no overseas aid was available. Would the President welcome greater influence over the distribution of overseas aid in his Department?

Mr. Heseltine: I should certainly welcome any increased influence if it were available, but that does not mean to say that I shall be allowed to get it.

Mr. Bell: We welcome the presence of the President of the Board of Trade today and congratulate him on keeping his post. It must be the first Government reshuffle that prepares for opposition.

However, the Opposition heard nothing but smugness and self-satisfaction from the Dispatch Box in response to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates). The hon. Member could have referred to the inward investment of Dupont on Teesside. It bought the ICI fibre business to close it down and move to France, and 520 jobs were lost. Eight hundred and twenty jobs were lost at Pontypool by the same firm. When we speak about the north-east of England, Swan Hunter has just been, or will be, closed down. How is that for smugness and self-satisfaction?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is playing the traditional Labour party game—singling out an example of something that has gone wrong in order to generalise, to the maximum damage of the British economy. Unemployment is decreasing in the north-east, as it is in the economy at large. Instead of trying to find ways of explaining that away, the hon. Member should get to his feet and praise it.

Gas Interconnector

2. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on constructing an interconnector for gas between Britain and the continent of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): We want freer trade in gas throughout Europe. I believe that a private sector gas interconnector between the United Kingdom and Belgium will play a major role in achieving that.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that the private sector is keen to finance its own pipeline to the continent? Does he agree that it is about time that the European Community moved towards a single market on energy?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. There is no suggestion of Government funding contributing to the building of the interconnector, although I recently met my Belgian counterpart to begin negotiations on a treaty between the UK and Belgium to cover the interconnector.

As for my hon. Friend's comments about the European Commission, I do think that the Union needs to move towards a single market in energy, in the same way as we have moved towards a single market in goods and services.

Mr. Salmond: If the Minister believes in a free market in gas throughout Europe, why is his Department preventing other Norwegian fields from going through the Frigg delivery system and landing at St. Fergus in my constituency? Does not that reveal an inconsistency in his approach, or is he just against St. Fergus as a landfall point for gas?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am committed to the continuation of St. Fergus as a major terminal for gas, whether it be from Norway or from other sources. I recently had representations from the chairman of the Banff and Buchan Conservative association, urging that Britannia gas should arrive at St. Fergus.

As for the discussions that are going on with the Norwegians, those are difficult matters, which are important for the future of the UK gas industry, and doubtless we shall resume the discussions when we hear next from the Norwegians.

Sir John Hannam: Does my hon. Friend accept that the introduction of full competition in the gas supplied to the domestic consumer could result in a drop in prices of about 10 or 11 per cent. to them? Will he therefore introduce a full liberalisation of the gas market to domestic consumers, and allow independent companies to come in and compete with British Gas?

Mr. Eggar: I am well aware of the point that my hon. Friend makes. As he knows, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced that legislation would be brought forward, subject to the availability of parliamentary time, in order to introduce competition.

Mr. O'Neill: I want to return to the Minister's answer to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on the subject of Norwegian gas. Are we going to have to wait until Norway is in the European Community before the matter is resolved? Will it be resolved on the basis of Britain being in a minority of one once again?

Mr. Eggar: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman—I am not surprised at the Scottish nationalist Member. We are in negotiations with the Norwegians and want to support Britain's best interests. I find it extraordinary that

the official Opposition should urge a collapse on our part to agree to whatever requests the Norwegians make. That is not looking after Britain's best interests.

Steel Industry

3. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the British Iron and Steel Producers Association to discuss prospects for the steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the British Iron and Steel Producers Association. I spoke after its annual general meeting on 3 December last year, since when I have had a number of meetings with the industry and my officials keep in regular contact with the association.

Mrs. Jackson: Is the Minister aware that the cost of electricity for major energy users using the electricity pooled price system continues to place a great burden on the major steel industry in this country? Will he respond to the report that he received from Stephen Littlechild on the subject only yesterday or the day before, and say today that he will allow trading outside the pool system for major energy users such as steel workers in my constituency, so that they can carry on making the best special steel in Europe for many years to come?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that the hon. Lady knows that those are matters for the director general, who is reviewing the position. They are issues which my officials and I regularly discuss with the association to ensure that we and, if necessary, the director general are fully aware of its views.

Sir Michael Grylls: Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can in government and Europe to get rid of the remaining subsidies that so many European firms still give to their steel industries and which damage the British economy so much? Will he continue to press for what is probably one of the most important European issues—to get the market in steel operating on a fair basis?

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree with my hon. Friend that achieving a level playing field and getting rid of state subsidies is a prime objective and the best way to ensure that efficient British producers can benefit from a single market. It is an objective to which I have given a great deal of time and I can assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to press for progress. I think that progress is being made, albeit more slowly than we should like.

Electricity Supply Industry

4. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the regulation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Eggar: Effective regulation, together with the introduction of competition, is bringing considerable benefits to consumers. Domestic customers, for example, have seen a 7 per cent. reduction in prices, in real terms, over the past two financial years.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister agree that it is a scandal that about £12 million has been awarded by themselves to the chairmen of the electricity supply industry? Does that show that the regulatory bodies act in the interests of the consumer or in the interests of the electricity companies?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made the Government's view on salary increases clear. On the subject of the future of electricity prices, the Director General of Electricity Supply is currently conducting a review of the distribution price mechanism. I understand that he is likely to report within the next two or three weeks.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that it is an expressed view of the Electricity Consumers Council that the benefits of privatisation have been passed on to the shareholders, but not in full to the consumers and that, in its view, electricity prices are at least 5 per cent. too high? What action will the Government take to ensure that the benefits that they claim come from privatisation are passed to consumers in the form of lower prices?

Mr. Eggar: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new appointment. It is slightly unfortunate that he did not listen to my initial response. I made it clear that there had been a 7 per cent. reduction in real terms in prices for domestic consumers over the past two years as a direct result of privatisation.

Mr. Robin Cook: What will the Minister do when he is faced with a proposal from the electricity companies to sell the national grid? Does he remember that when the Government sold all the electricity companies, they made £5 billion? Is not he surprised that the electricity companies now expect to get back £4 billion of that just by selling the national grid? Does not that suggest that the price of privatisation was a bad bargain? Will he demand that the public, who built the national grid, get some of the money, or will the electricity companies make a windfall profit at the expense of a public already thoroughly fed up with paying for bigger boardroom salaries?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is so blinded by socialist dogma that he will not recognise the considerable benefit to domestic consumers as a direct result of privatisation. There has been a 7 per cent. reduction in electricity prices in real terms and there are likely to be further reductions. There have also been significant reductions for all industrial consumers other than the very large ones.

On the hon. Gentleman's initial question about the national grid, unlike him I shall listen to the proposals made by the regional electricity companies, if they make any. I do not make up my mind until I have heard the facts.

Gas Consumers Council

5. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evaluation he has made of the impact of the reduction in the Gas Consumers Council's budget in the months of April, May and June on its safety advisory services to senior citizens and others.

10. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of how the reduction in the Gas Consumers Council's budget will affect its service to (a) people with disabilities and (b) others.

Mr. Eggar: The Gas Consumers Council has indicated that it will continue to be able to carry out all its functions including services to the disabled and to senior citizens.

Mr. Cummings: Is the Minister aware that, as a result of the cuts, the Gas Consumers Council will not be able to afford to reprint its leaflets on gas safety? That is happening at a time when many elderly people have defective gas appliances. Is it not both a folly and a disgrace to remove those resources from the leading organisation responsible for informing customers of gas safety?

Mr. Eggar: I am not aware of any proposals by the GCC to cut back on its literature, whether relating to safety or otherwise—

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: It is a disgrace.

Mr. Eggar: Is the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) really suggesting that the Government should not seek in any way to control expenditure on the GCC? Is it alone to be exempted from expenditure restrictions?

Mr. McKelvey: Does not the Minister understand that, of the £209,000 savings, only £2,000 will be saved by the Department of Trade and Industry? In fact, we have spent that £2,000 by asking these two questions. The other £207,000 will be savings for the gas people. Can we have a guarantee that that £207,000 will not go into the hip pocket of the chairman of British Gas?

Mr. Eggar: At the end of the day, additional costs to British Gas effectively mean that consumers have to pay more for their gas. The Government have a duty to restrict expenditure, in an equal way, across the consumer bodies as a whole. There is no reason why the GCC should be exempted from that.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Why does not the Minister simply tell the House the truth? If he speaks to Captain Ian Powe, who heads the GCC—which the hon. Gentleman obviously has not done—Captain Powe will tell him that he is no longer able to reproduce the key gas safety leaflets for tenants, senior citizens and others advising them about the perils of gas and of not maintaining gas appliances.

Why will not the Minister be frank with the House and say that the Government have cut the GCC's budget by £209,000, that they have done so because the Treasury demanded it, that consumers will get a poorer deal and that old-age pensioners, tenants and others with gas supplies will now get a far poorer service? Why does not the hon. Gentleman tell us the truth for once?

Mr. Eggar: Scaremongering may come naturally to the hon. Gentleman, but it does not make a sensible contribution to an important discussion. My understanding is that the Gas Consumer Council is fully confident of being able to carry out all its functions.

Mr. Cummings: Not true.

Mr. Eggar: It is true. But, like other consumer councils, it is having to absorb a small reduction in its budget. It is right that it should have to restrict public expenditure as do similar bodies.

Local Development, Cumbria

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next intends to discuss with representatives of the West Cumbria development agency the future of local development.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no plans to meet West Cumbrian representatives in the near future. Officials in the Government office for the north-west are in regular and close contact with the West Cumbria development agency. As the Minister with responsibility for the north-west, I go there frequently and I should be happy to see those representatives if the hon. Gentleman were to request it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I raise the issue that I have raised repeatedly during the past 12 months in the House —the empty 500,000 sq ft former Volvo factory in Workington. What is happening in the Department? What efforts are currently being made to try to find either a tenant or a new owner on the international market of footloose industry that is interested in coming to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government have shown willingness to help Cumbria in many respects in recent years. During the past three years, £12 million has been invested in projects designed to provide improved facilities for business and commerce alone, and that is part of a continuing programme spear-headed by English Partnerships.

Current Government investment in Cumbria for economic development runs at some £65 million per annum. Of course I hope that the site will be utilised in due course. With the economy on the up, I am sure that the prospects for that part of the region are much better than they have been for many years.

Sub-post Offices

7. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about security of sub-post offices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Security in sub-post offices is an operational matter for the Post Office in conjunction with the individual sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses who own them. The Post Office takes security throughout the post office network very seriously and keeps it under constant review.

Mrs. Roche: Given the alarming number of attacks on the staff of sub-post offices, including the recent tragic murder of a sub-postmaster on the Archway road in my constituency, will the Minister give an assurance that he will have urgent talks with the Post Office about the funding of vital security measures such as alarm systems and closed circuit television?

Mr. McLoughlin: The whole House will wish me to express condolences to the family of the hon. Lady's constituent who was murdered. The Post Office pays for safes, alarm systems, including panic buttons, and counter security screens. The cost of additional security measures

that are deemed necessary is a matter for the individual post office. I will closely consider what the hon. Lady has said in this case, but the facts are still under investigation.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that this is a serious matter, and that in my constituency a few years ago a sub-postmistress was murdered in most tragic circumstances? Is my hon. Friend further aware that many attacks are carried out, particularly in remote areas, by people who have first committed car crimes? In one case, thieves towed away a safe using an agricultural vehicle. Will my hon. Friend tell the Home Office that we expect a much more robust attitude from it to the whole question of car crime?

Mr. McLoughlin: I will certainly pass on my hon. Friend's concerns to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government, in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, have taken a number of measures which show their determination to crack down on crime and those who commit it.

Mr. Hain: In respect of the long-term security in the sub-post office network, the Minister will be aware that I am opposed to the privatisation proposals, which we will fight every inch of the way, but may I seriously appeal to him not to break up the Post Office? If the Government are determined to privatise it, may I urge them to keep the Post Office together, as every other post office in the world has been kept together? I realise that there is no accounting cross-subsidy, but there are considerable organisational cross-subsidies and a synergy between the different elements of the Post Office which must be maintained.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman does not like the fact that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has devised a scheme that is warmly welcomed by the people who run post offices. It is not surprising that the hon. Gentleman opposes our plans for privatisation in this case. He has never supported any of the others. If he had supported this, I would be very worried.

Japanese Investment

8. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment has been made of the contribution of Japanese investment in the British car industry in securing jobs.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): Japanese inward investment to the United Kingdom car industry has been very substantial, with total planned investment of more than £2 billion, creating more than 7,000 direct jobs. The wider benefits have also been significant, particularly among components suppliers.

Mr. Booth: Britain and the Government have enjoyed wide and considerable success in attracting Japanese investment, with nearly half of all that made in Europe in the last 10 years coming to this country—as is evidenced by the successful business men who have chosen Finchley in which to live. To what does my right hon. Friend ascribe that success? Is it the Government's low corporate taxation, the welcome that we give such companies or the success of the DTI's efforts? None of those would be offered by the Opposition.

Mr. Needham: It can primarily be ascribed to a Conservative Government who welcome Japanese investment and who introduced the industrial relations reforms that mean that Japanese companies setting up in the United Kingdom can operate as productively and profitably as in Japan, and to the fact that Britain does not have a Labour Government.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Putting to one side the Minister's juvenile remarks about the reasons for investment in Britain, is he aware that it is widely welcomed throughout the country? The increasing level of local manufacture is also much welcomed. If the Minister can get down to industry and leave silly politics to one side, should not his next step be increasingly to concentrate design and development in the UK, which has many outstanding skills ready for exploitation? What will the Minister do about that?

Mr. Needham: I realise that the hon. Gentleman does not like political reality coming into his long and distinguished industrial career. However, he is right to say that we must maximise research and development facilities and our ability to design cars, which is formidable. He is also right to emphasise that we must give British industry the back-up and support to meet all its needs, which will ensure that the British automotive and components industries continue the success that they have enjoyed over the past few years. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, as long as we are in government, we will continue to do that.

Competitiveness

9. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further responses he has had from companies to his White Paper on competitiveness.

Mr. Heseltine: British businesses have been very positive about the White Paper on competitiveness. Its analysis has been accepted and its new initiatives welcomed.

Mr. Amess: Does my right hon. Friend agree that only by companies continuing to improve their competitiveness, as set out in the White Paper, will the United Kingdom economy continue to enjoy growth, will living standards continue to improve and will unemployment fall—as is happening throughout the country and in my constituency in particular? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the politics of envy and unfairness as espoused by the socialists on the Opposition Benches would destroy the competitiveness of UK companies?

Mr. Heseltine: I heard what my hon. Friend said. I wholly agree with the thrust of his observations, which is why one takes such satisfaction from the most favourable set of economic statistics that we have enjoyed for many a long year.

Mr. Caborn: I welcome the White Paper, but it is unfortunate that there was an absence of Treasury involvement. Will the President of the Board of Trade make representations to his colleagues on the Treasury Bench for time to be made available for a full debate on the competitiveness of British industry, the backcloth being both the White Paper and the Select Committee report on the same subject?

Mr. Heseltine: I welcome the opportunity to debate the competitiveness White Paper, and the Government ensured that such a debate took place the other day. Conspicuously absent from that debate was any Labour Member.

Mr. Oppenheim: Has my right hon. Friend seen the recent report by the Institute of Economic and Social Research? It showed that whereas UK manufacturing productivity lagged badly behind Germany in the 1970s, we out-performed Germany's growth in the 1980s; and that whereas we lagged behind other G7 members in the 1960s and 1970s, we were ahead of most of them in the 1980s. Does not that show that our supply side reforms in the 1980s helped to close the gap with our competitors? The period that we were in real danger of becoming a skivvy economy with Mickey Mouse jobs was not under this Government but under Labour.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point to the lesson that, in productivity, we significantly caught up our European competitors during the 1980s, as a direct consequence of the supply side reforms that the Government introduced. My hon. Friend is also right to refer to the fact that we still have not yet achieved the productivity levels of some of our European competitors, and we must achieve that if we are to be truly competitive.

Mr. Dalyell: Do Ministers approve of the predatory pricing policies of Rupert Murdoch and *The Times*?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that we do not approve of predatory pricing policies, and if they offend the law, we are under a responsibility to examine them, but he would not expect me to make specific comments about the matters to which he referred unless they had been properly considered and reflected on.

Mr. Butcher: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the depth and, indeed, the width of his White Paper on competitiveness, which has been warmly welcomed by broad sectors of industry, but might not a bit be missing? The White Paper is silent on the supply and price of capital to the capital-intensive small and medium-sized manufacturing sector. Given the growing worldwide shortage of risk capital, making Britain the most attractive place for mobile international risk capital would in turn help our manufacturing and small firms sector. Will he make representations to the Treasury on that so that we may be competitive in that regard as well?

Mr. Heseltine: I know of the interest that my hon. Friend takes in the matter. He will know that the White Paper referred to those issues—indeed, specifically to inquiries that are now being conducted in the Treasury as part of its normal responsibilities and budget-forming judgment. The White Paper did not avoid the issues. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry referred to page 99 and following pages. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have a glance at that important part of the White Paper when he has a moment during the long recess.

Mr. Barry Jones: Would it run counter to the White Paper if Railtrack were allowed to push up the costs of transporting by rail the coil and the raw materials for British Rail plc? Will he look at that matter? Does he agree that, unless Railtrack holds back, British Steel plc may find it hard to keep open some of its smaller plants?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that the prime responsibility for Railtrack falls to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. My Department is always interested in matters of competitiveness, but not, however, in those that are hypothetical and put in a scare technique method, long in advance of the risks having materialised.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the competitive Ford workers in my constituency who yesterday helped to secure Ford's investment decision to place its largest industrial research plant at Dunton? Ford UK placed it there because of the Ford workers in my constituency and because labour relations in Britain are now so attractive that we are the most competitive country in the whole of the Ford spectrum for that massive investment.

Mr. Heseltine: I am delighted to support my hon. Friend's welcome for that important decision. I had the pleasure, just this week, of discussing with the chief executive officer of Ford the long-term plans for his company. He stressed to me that there were considerable opportunities for the United Kingdom, provided that we can achieve the competitive standards that would then attract his board to back the United Kingdom as a base in Europe.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the President aware that yesterday's report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development put Britain bottom in Europe for rights at work, with a mark of zero out of 10? If he is aware of that, will he confirm that that report could find no evidence that the social chapter had destroyed jobs in any of the countries that applied it? But it did find that Britain spent less on training than any other major European country. In the light of that report, will not even this Government now recognise that the key to competitiveness is a secure, skilled work force, and that we will not build the best work force in Europe on the basis of the worst rights in Europe and the poorest training in Europe?

Mr. Heseltine: The key to competitiveness is running an economy that enables our companies to win and attract people to base their investment here. The hon. Gentleman would do far better to recognise that the most important aspect of the job market is the fact that this country's economy is generating jobs faster than are the economies of most of its European competitors, because its climate is working economically and helping it to lead Europe out of recession. That is the Government's important achievement, and nothing that the hon. Gentleman says by way of selective quotation will undermine it.

Post Office Green Paper

11. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on his Green Paper on the Post Office.

Mr. Heseltine *rose—*

Mr. Tony Banks: A reshuffle!

Mr. Heseltine: I can tell the House that the result that I am about to announce is just as good as the result that the reshuffle will produce.

The Green Paper was published on 30 June and responses are invited by 30 September. I have therefore understandably received relatively few responses to the document to date.

Mr. Marshall: At a time when the Post Office is facing increased international competition, and when the German and Dutch Post Offices are being privatised, would not it be entirely wrong to handicap British industry by denying it the advantages of privatisation and access to the capital markets?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend would not expect me to make any premature decisions. We are consulting widely on the future of the Royal Mail, and we have published an excellent Green Paper. Although the Green Paper expressed preference for the Government's proposal, we will listen carefully to what all right hon. and hon. Members, and people outside the House, have to say before we reach a final decision.

Mr. Barnes: Is not it pretty disgraceful that the chairman of the Post Office should jump on board the privatisation proposal in the Green Paper in the way that he has? Nearly all the chief executives and other officials who have been involved in the privatisation of gas, electricity and other utilities have responded similarly, rather than by recognising their public responsibility to operate public services. Has not that something to do with the Government's policy on monetarism and the private market?

Mr. Heseltine: That is one of the most preposterous statements that I have heard from an Opposition long famed for making preposterous statements. Every Tom, Dick and Harry in the trade union movement seems to be entitled to have his view paraded in the House as though it were the ultimate document; when the chairman comments, what he says is regarded as an insult and an abuse. I do not understand what democracy means to Opposition Members.

Mr. Dunn: In running scare stories about the future of sub-post offices, are not the Labour party and its socialist allies the Liberal Democrats in great danger of crying wolf just once too often, given that the future of the sub-post offices has been secured in the Green Paper?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend enables me to make the same point that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) made a few moments ago. The proposals for the sub-post offices have been warmly welcomed by representatives of the owners of those post offices, which shows once again that the Government have got it right and the Labour party has got it wrong.

Mr. Cousins: Will the President of the Board of Trade admit that 40 per cent. of the business of sub-post offices consists of the payment of cash benefits, and that a secure system for such payment is long overdue? Will he give the House and the sub-post offices a guarantee that they will not be charged for access to any new technology that may be introduced for secure payment and that banks and supermarkets will not be allowed access to that system, thus destroying the livelihood of those running sub-post offices?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not think the hon. Gentleman understands that the sub-post offices already provide some banking services. The issue is whether they should be allowed to provide wider banking services. Nothing so characterises the difference between the Government and the Labour party as the fact that Labour wants to stop people from doing things, while we want to expand their opportunities.

Mr. Jenkin: Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on local authorities that are already launching an anti-privatisation campaign—for instance, my local authority in Colchester, which is controlled by a Lib-Lab alliance? Are not those local authorities wasting their time in running unnecessary scare stories and should they not concentrate their efforts on keeping their council tax down?

Mr. Heseltine: That would be extremely attractive to local tax payers. My hon. Friend will appreciate, however, that I shall have to listen extremely carefully to all the representations and judge them on their merits before recommending to my colleagues the way in which we should proceed as the Green Paper consultation period comes to an end.

Competitiveness

12. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet representatives of the TUC to discuss his White Paper, "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win."

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet the TUC. I had a discussion with the TUC in the run-up to the competitiveness White Paper. We are always ready for a constructive exchange of views with the TUC.

Mr. Chisholm: Why does not the Minister accept the recommendations of the Select Committee report on competitiveness in relation to a training levy, encouragement of research and development and restraint of dividend payments? Will the Minister reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about yesterday's OECD report on training, which showed a dramatic decline in the 1990s in this country so that expenditure is now a quarter of that in Germany? Will the Minister respond to a recent report, sponsored by his own Department, which pointed out that the top 200 international companies spend three times as much on R and D as on dividend payments whereas the top 362 companies in this country spend twice as much on dividend payments as on R and D? What will he do about those problems?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has studied carefully the White Paper on competitiveness and we welcome the interest, even from the Opposition, in this important subject. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that the White Paper responds significantly to the recommendations of the Select Committee report and gives particular emphasis to the importance of training and education. It includes a wide range of new initiatives costing £300 million further to strengthen and build on what we have already done to improve our standards of training and to raise the quality of education—measures which were opposed consistently by the Opposition parties.

Mr. Fabricant: When my right hon. Friend meets representatives of the TUC, will he point out to them that the infrastructure of the United Kingdom is important for our balance of trade? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the chairman of British Steel is now saying that, because of what has happened today, last week and the week before, he will now have to reconsider the means by which steel is transported in the United Kingdom? It is not just the passengers who are being affected by the rail strike but freight.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend makes an obvious point clearly and strongly. It is extraordinary that it is a point not appreciated by the Labour party, which has consistently failed to condemn the unnecessary dispute.

Mr. Hardy: A few minutes ago, the President of the Board of Trade said that British industry should continue efforts to catch up with our European competitors. Is he aware that many industries, not least the engineering steel industry, have not only caught up with, but have surpassed, their European competitors, but that has done them little good in the face of unfair competition? Quite a few months ago, the Minister told the House that he had secured a guarantee that the unfair competition would be monitored. What has been the result of that monitoring and when will industry and the trade unions be aware that the monitoring has taken place?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the achievements of the privatised British steel industry. He will surely recognise that the improvement from over 13 man hours to produce a tonne of steel to under four hours, which is the latest figure, is as a result of the productivity gains achieved by the private sector management. I share with the hon. Gentleman concern about achieving a level playing field. We are making progress, as I told the House earlier, and the Commission has made it clear that it is prepared to open proceedings against any companies that breach the agreement reached on 17 December.

Mr. Batiste: If the TUC genuinely wants competitiveness and wants British business to win, would not the best thing it could do today be to tell its union members that industrial action in pursuit of inflationary wage demands is undermining everything that British industry will need in the years ahead to fight in an increasingly competitive world environment?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend makes an eminently sensible suggestion. I can only add that another useful and sensible thing that it could do to help the competitiveness of British industry and its own influence would be to sever its links with the Labour party.

Mr. Clapham: In the light of the OECD report published yesterday, which cited trade unions, consultation and collective bargaining as being good for labour market efficiency, will the Minister be urging on business the extension of trade union rights and trade union recognition as a way of improving British competitiveness?

Mr. Sainsbury: No. We shall leave those matters to be decided by management in consultation with their own work force.

Post Office Counters Ltd.

13. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what would be the cost of running Post Office Counters Ltd. as a separate business.

Mr. Heseltine: Since 1986, Post Office Counters Ltd. has been run as a separate business, negotiating arm's-length contracts with clients and suppliers. On this basis, the company has been consistently profitable.

Mr. McFall: The Minister will know that the Post Office directly subsidises 10,000 post offices to the tune of £30 million a year and that those post offices are to be found in rural and small urban areas. Given that they are the areas that will suffer any losses, will the cross-subsidy be maintained in future? If not, will not it mean an accelerated death for rural and small urban post offices?

Mr. Heseltine: The House knows by now that we have made clear the value that we place on the maintenance of the network of sub-post offices. If we had not been able to satisfy the sub-post offices of our good intentions, they would not have welcomed our proposals in the way that they have.

Departmental Suppliers (Unpaid Bills)

14. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the amount of money owed by his Department to suppliers in 1992 and 1993 which remained unpaid after 30 days from the presentation of invoices.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information in the form requested by the hon. Gentleman could be made available only at disproportionate cost. However, the Department's annual surveys of its payment performance showed that in 1991-92, 80 per cent. of invoices were paid either within 30 days or within the agreed credit period. The corresponding figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 were 90.5 and 90 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Michie: Talking about disproportionate cost, what about the firms that are struggling because they have not been paid? Why does not the President of the Board of Trade ensure that his Department pays its bills promptly or within 30 days instead of setting a bad example to other firms which are also dragging their feet paying suppliers? Is not this just another case of, "Physician, heal thyself"?

Mr. Hamilton: I have just told the hon. Gentleman that there has been a substantial improvement—from 80 to 90 per cent.—in the Department's practice in paying its bills within 30 days or according to the period set out in the contract. We hope to do better still, but the hon. Gentleman should recognise that there is not unanimity, even in the small business sector, about the argument for making compulsory the payment of debts within 30 days or any other period because many people fear that such legislation could be used by big companies against small companies.

Mr. Forman: While the figures that my hon. Friend has just given clearly show the good example being set by his Department, which is very important, does he agree that options are open to firms of all sizes—for example, the granting of discounts for cash—that encourage prompt payment, and we do not necessarily have to have recourse to unwieldy law?

Mr. Hamilton: As the Minister with responsibility for deregulation, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that there may be market solutions to the problem that are better than centralised regulation. I am grateful to him for the interest that he takes in this matter and for his useful suggestions.

Mr. Purchase: Would not the President of the Board of Trade be doing British industry in general a service if he were to encourage all Government Departments to meet their responsibility to make early payment right across the place? I am sure that he recognises that cash management problems, especially in small businesses, are extremely acute at the moment and likely to continue to be so. Therefore, will he have a word with colleagues in other Departments and ensure an evenness of policy?

Mr. Hamilton: There have been two questions implying that I am now the President of the Board of Trade —I am afraid that I have not seen the most recent news on television.

Of course the DTI is concerned to ensure that the payment practice of all UK companies and organisations that have to pay bills is improved. That is certainly the best practice that we should like to see, but whether it is best achieved by imposing regulation is very questionable. As I said a moment ago, there is by no means unanimity, even among small firms and their representative organisations, about the way forward. We believe that the package of measures outlined in the White Paper on competitiveness will be a useful step forward. We will keep it under review and we have said that in two years we shall examine how things have gone and if we are required to do more, there is no doubt that we shall do it.

Regional Selective Assistance

15. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to change the criteria relating to regional selective assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government keep the criteria relating to regional selective assistance under continuous review to ensure that we get the best value for money and that the RSA scheme makes an effective contribution to the competitiveness of British industry.

Mrs. Campbell: Does that mean that the Minister agrees with the DTI spokesperson who said that there was increasing emphasis on the quality of the jobs created, and is he therefore looking for excuses to cut regional selective assistance—yes or no?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that, because of her interest in the subject, the hon. Lady will be aware that expenditure on regional selective assistance last year was substantially greater than expenditure the previous year. We expect expenditure this year to be further increased.

Manufactured Goods (Exports)

16. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the latest information he has on the level of exports of manufactured goods.

Mr. Needham: In the latest three months, manufactured export volumes were 8 per cent. higher than those of a year earlier, and were at an all-time record level.

Mr. Hendry: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the fact that exports, manufacturing output, productivity, retail sales and business confidence are up, while we are keeping down the social costs on business, the rate of strikes, interest rates and the rate of inflation, gives us the best opportunity for increased growth, new jobs and rising living standards for everyone?

Mr. Needham: I agree with my hon. Friend, but the key needs are to ensure that that confidence is maintained and that business in this country realises how good the news is. It would be helpful if, from time to time, Opposition Members supported us in that aim.

Mr. Tony Banks: When did the United Kingdom last have a balance of payments surplus in manufactured goods?

Mr. Needham: We last had such a surplus at the end of the 1970s. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The fact is, however, that the proportion of manufactured goods as a percentage of the economy of this country is no lower than the proportion in France or in Italy. Our surplus on invisibles is growing. Our volume of manufactured trade and exports has stabilised since the mid-1980s; the decline that continued remorselessly when the Labour party was in power has stopped.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that engineering employers in East Anglia have recently reported a considerable improvement in export performance? Is not that good news? As our exports to the European Union are rising faster than our exports to countries outside the Union, is not it vital that, as a Government and as a country, we continue to work at the heart of Europe?

Mr. Needham: Of course my hon. Friend is right. Furthermore, the manufacturing deficit continues to decline. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) used to be always on his feet saying that it was a danger and a disgrace that the deficit in manufactured goods was likely to increase, but now that it is falling he sits on his hands and looks at his feet.

National Consumer Council

18. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the effect of the reduction in the National Consumer Council's budget on its work in 1994-95.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am confident that the National Consumer Council will continue to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers as a whole.

Mr. Jamieson: Does not the Minister consider that reducing the budget of the NCC by £430,000 a year will seriously impair its ability to represent consumer interests? Is that reduction being made because the NCC's recent report has embarrassed the Government? For example, it showed that single pensioners in the south-west have to spend 9.1 per cent. of their income simply to pay their water bills.

Mr. McLoughlin: We take no lessons from the Opposition on the funding of the NCC. In 1976-77,

funding was £452,000. The latest figure is £2.47 million which is an increase in real terms of 46.5 per cent. so we will shall take no lessons from the Opposition.

Ministerial Visits

19. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to visit the steel industry in Rotherham to discuss the impact of subsidies to other EC steel industries.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit the steel industry in Rotherham.

Mr. MacShane: If the President of the Board of Trade were to visit any of the steel plants in Rotherham, he would find a strong sense of partnership and co-operation between trade unions and managers, contributing to the success of the British steel industry. Does the Minister agree that the demotion of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—the most anti-partnership and right-wing Minister in the Cabinet—to the Department of Employment shows that the partnership policies *needed to make British industry* a success have no chance at all until the next election?

Mr. Sainsbury: If the hon. Gentleman were to visit any section of British industry, he would find now a much greater sense of partnership between management and work force; they are not two sides, but one side of industry. That is, of course, a result of the reforms of industrial relations introduced by this Government, which were consistently opposed by the Labour party, which the hon. Gentleman supports. Those reforms have contributed substantially to the increase in productivity and to the improvement in the performance of British industry of which we should all be proud, rather than constantly denigrating it as the Labour party does.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Now that you have had a chance to look at yesterday's *Hansard*, does it occur to you that it was just a little bit presumptuous of the Prime Minister to assume that permission to ask the private notice questions which he recommended to all of us would necessarily be granted by you? On the basis of the Prime Minister's attitude, have you, by chance, had a request from him to make a statement to satisfy us in relation to Mr. Santer's statement yesterday in Strasbourg?

Madam Speaker: No, I have had no information from any members of the Government, including the Prime Minister, that they seek to make a statement. As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, although I am often tempted by the questions put to me about private notice questions, I do not discuss them, or my decisions about them, across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) made a suggestion to the Government at Question Time about the possibility of keeping the Post Office together rather than splitting it up. I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker. The Under-Secretary of State for Technology roundly rejected that suggestion in spite of the fact that the President of the Board of Trade had said that a consultation process was in hand. The House is rising tomorrow—

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not want an argument. I am not involved in political argument. I simply want a procedural point to be put to me.

Mr. Bruce: The point is that the House will rise tomorrow and will not meet again before the consultation process has been concluded. What avenues are available to hon. Members to ensure that we get guidance from the President of the Board of Trade about which Minister is in charge of the consultation?

Madam Speaker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Order Paper, which shows that we are due to have a three-hour motion on the Adjournment which, if I am allowed to, I shall get to fairly shortly.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Looking at the Order Paper for today, I see that the business of the day has been changed as a result of an hon. Member's action yesterday. In consequence, Back-Benchers' time in the Adjournment debates under the Consolidated Fund Bill debate will be limited and it may not be possible, because my debate is No. 16— *[Interruption.]* It has been changed, I understand, to No. 15 as a result of the withdrawal of a debate by an hon. Member. However, it may not be possible for the House to discuss the very important matter of saving the Royal Marines school of music in Deal before the recess. Could we not have some arrangement whereby Back Benchers' matters are taken into account better than they have been?

Madam Speaker: Over the past few weeks, I have heard the hon. Gentleman raise on many occasions the matter to which he refers. I am sure that his constituents are delighted by the methods he uses to bring the matter to the House's attention.

BILLS PRESENTED

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Scotland)

Mr. Gordon McMaster, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Sir David Steel, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Thomas Graham, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Adam Ingram, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. William McKelvey, Mrs. Maria Fyfe and Mr. Don Dixon, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Scotland, discrimination against disabled persons on the ground of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 159.]

Sale of Teesside International Airport &c.

3.34 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the sale of Teesside International Airport to the private sector, and to make other provision in respect of the sale of municipally owned airports.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to introduce a Bill which would make provision for the sale of Teesside international airport and all other municipally owned airports. Currently, Teesside international airport is jointly owned by Cleveland county council, which has a 60 per cent. stake, and Durham county council, which has a 40 per cent. stake. The annual report of accounts shows that they have invested some £19 million of council tax payers' money in the airport recently.

I shall present four reasons why I believe that the sale would be in the best interests of the current owners, council tax payers, the airport itself, local business and air travellers. The first reason is the rapid growth in air travel. Teesside international airport was opened in 1964 and its first flight took place on 18 April, carrying some 10 passengers to Manchester. During the first year, passenger movements numbered 14,258. This year, the airport will achieve in the region of 500,000 passenger movements and is projecting, on its figures, an increase to some 1 million movements towards the end of the century. Clearly that growth in air passenger transport could not have been envisaged.

I turn to my second reason, which is one of the reasons why that growth has taken place: the new opportunities in air travel which have been brought about by the Government. At this stage, I pay a tribute to the role played by my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), who, as Secretary of State for Transport, played a tremendous role in being the architect of the third air transport liberalisation package which gave European Union carriers free access to any international airport within the Community and allowed airlines to set their own fares. That competition will ensure that fares continue to fall and that air travel, with all its benefits, is made more accessible to more people.

My third reason is that, following the welcome decision of the local government commissioners, which was endorsed by the High Court recently, Cleveland county council is due to be abolished, and there will be substantial changes to Durham county council. At present, the board of Teesside international airport consists of councillors from the two authorities. These decisions will ensure that in future, if the airport is not sold, the board of an international airport in a highly competitive and technical field will be made up of representatives—councillors—from six authorities. The probability or possibility of that being an asset to the excellent managing director and the highly motivated and highly professional staff at Teesside international airport is unbelievable.

That brings me to my fourth and final reason—the opportunities that exist for the development of Teesside international airport. The airport stands on a huge 720-acre site. With investment of about £3 million, a new road could provide access to the southern side of the airport, with 250 acres of land ripe for development. That would bring much-needed jobs and investment to the area.

Improvements to the rail link, with the east coast main line only a few miles away at Darlington, is another significant investment which is long overdue. The hotel and conference centre could also be improved. At present, the hotel is the former officers' mess. In the latter part of the 21st century, an international airport should have a level of investment and a hotel and conference centre befitting the thriving hubbub of commercial activity which is Teesside.

Also, if our regional airports are to be able to compete in this new and exciting highly competitive market, they will require massive investment in runways, hangars, hotels, terminals, baggage handling and security. The big question arises: who will pay for all that while the airports remain under local authority control? I venture to suggest that, if my constituents from Loftus, some 40 miles away, were asked whether they should provide funding for repairs to a runway, they would point, rightly, to the parlous state of the roofs on their council homes, or to the school with its temporary prefabs which have now been there for 30 years. Local authority investment should be channelled into such work and not into an international airport, which could attract private capital and do a far better job in the process.

The councillors and aldermen who took the courageous decision in 1964 to convert RAF Middleton St. George into Teesside international airport could not, in their wildest dreams, have anticipated the growth in air travel that has occurred. That growth demands investment. The world has also changed and regional airports have outgrown the authorities that own them. If those authorities continue to cling on to them, they will stifle those airports' development, but if they set them free they can take pride in the role that they have played.

3.39 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates). It was interesting to listen to the spirited way in which he expressed his wish to take from our local community another asset that is one of our family heirlooms. As the Earl of Stockton said, privatising a nationalised industry is equivalent to selling the family silver.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh pointed out how successful Teesside international airport has been since 1964 and then gave a trailer not only for its privatisation, but for the privatisation of all the municipal airports. One can see how the Government are scraping around trying to find other assets to privatise. I predict that, once they have discovered that those airports represent an asset to be sold for profit, they will look at municipal golf courses.

The doctrine of privatisation has not been the success that the Government like to claim it has been. United Kingdom plc used to own revenue-earning, income-earning, profit-earning assets, but they were taken away from it. [HON. MEMBERS: "You must be joking."] British Telecom made profits, did it not? British Gas and the electricity companies made profits, did they not?

All those profits went to the state—United Kingdom plc. The day that those companies were privatised, that revenue was lost to the state. As a consequence, the Government are now looking for additional revenue to supplement that lost revenue, so we have ended up with VAT on fuel. When one privatises an asset, one deprives

the state of its income and tax revenue and ends up taking that lost money from pensioners' pockets. That is a travesty.

The hon. Member referred to the people of Loftus, but if we asked those people whether they wanted to contribute to their local economy or wanted to pay VAT on fuel, I know what the answer would be.

Durham county council and Cleveland county council have successfully managed Teesside international airport. They have demonstrated how local municipal councils can create a success story. Those councils should not be replaced by yet another quango, not least because, as quango after quango has been established, 70 per cent. of our revenues are handled by them rather than elected bodies which are democratically accountable.

The hon. Member, who is a Parliamentary Private Secretary, is looking for promotion to the Front Bench. Although it may be easy to get to that Bench, he will learn that it is even quicker to go from it to the Back Benches, as his hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) can tell him. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh is trailing yet another privatisation for the Government. The Treasury views the outcome of that privatisation as it did the privatisation of our ports—it sees little pots of gold that it can keep, and why not? With a £38 billion deficit to cover in its Budget per year, those pots of gold are very attractive.

Conservative Members live in a dream world. They have built an image for themselves of a successful economy and of a successful series of privatisations. What they have created, however, is a series of monopolies, which have ended up taking more money from the pockets of our people than was ever taken from them when those industries were nationalised.

We should oppose not only the proposal to take a local asset from Teesside, but the idea of privatising our municipal airports and the entire concept of privatisation. The family heirlooms have been sold, North sea oil has been used and we have a deficit of £38,000 million. That is a failure, not a success. I ask the House to oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No.19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 63, Noes 132.

Division No. 300] **[3.44**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Ashby, David
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Fabricant, Michael
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lidington, David
Mates, Michael
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waterson, Nigel
Whittingdale, John
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Bates and
Mr. Charles Hendry.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Alton, David
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting,—

(1) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House), the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House shall not lapse at Ten o'clock and may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Eight o'clock in the morning, at which hour, unless proceedings thereon have previously been concluded, the Motion shall lapse; and

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall, not later than one and a half hours after the Motion in the name of Mr. Greg Knight relating to Privileges has been entered upon, put the Question already proposed from the Chair and, if that Question is for the Amendment of the said Motion, then put forthwith the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended; notwithstanding the practice of the House, the Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion; and the said Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Adjournment (Summer)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising to-morrow, do adjourn until Monday 17th October.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

3.56 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): The House should not adjourn for the summer recess without having an opportunity to consider the National Audit Office report of 29 June 1994, dealing with the policies of the Department of Transport on the acquisition, management and disposal of land and property that has been purchased for road construction. Once again, the Department appears to be seen in a poor light, showing inadequate management and an apparent indifference to the anxieties and suffering of individual people living in their own homes.

On the schemes examined by the National Audit Office, the Department median average time to announce the preferred route was 10 years from the time of the original announcement, and a further six years to reach the compulsory purchase stage. Two schemes that the National Audit Office examined took 20 years or more.

The only part of the National Audit Office report in which the Department receives some encouragement is from section 2.24 onwards, concerning informing the public, but even there there are shortcomings, which are identified in section 2.26:

"In April 1994 the Highways Agency published their acquisitions charter statement, 'Your Home and Trunk Road Proposals', which aims to provide homeowners with clear and straightforward information on the type of compensation available for those whose property is affected and the stages at which they can claim. The charter statement does not commit the Highways Agency, however, to publicising on individual schemes the point at which discretionary purchase applications will be considered."

That is important.

Part 3 of the National Audit Office report gives the main cause for concern up and down the country, particularly in my constituency. It is the part dealing with the management of land and property. Section 3.4 of the informative report states:

"The Internal Audit examination in 1991 (paragraph 1.6) noted that the managing agreements then in force lacked clear guidance and objectives on rent levels, rent arrears, maintenance expenditure and vacancy levels. Although the Department issued further guidance on these matters in 1992, five of the 14 agents responding to the National Audit Office survey considered that the guidance still lacked clarity on some areas such as security costs."

On the important subject of monitoring performance, paragraph 3.6 states:

"The Department do not analyse and compare the performance of regions and agents and they do not, therefore, have information to identify variations and to help focus on particular problem areas. The Department's lack of computerised information until recently has also severely hampered their ability to monitor achievements."

On the subject of vacancy levels, section 3.9 states:

"The National Audit Office found that at 31 March 1993 for all land and property owned by the Department there were rent arrears of £2 million or 21 per cent. of total collectable income"

for that particular year.

In paragraph 3.11, the report states:

"The National Audit Office found that by 31 March 1993 for the 2350 residential agent managed properties, rent arrears of £1.2 million had accumulated, or about 20 per cent. of total collectable income for 1992-93. This compares with 17 per cent. one year earlier and 14 per cent. at 31 March 1987."

In my constituency, the problem has been exacerbated. Behind all the statistics produced by the National Audit

Office lie real life stories. One example involves an address at New Haw in my constituency—41, Pinewood avenue. A letter sent to me by the chief executive of Runnymede borough council stated:

"A particular property at 41 Pinewood Avenue provides a graphic illustration of the sorts of problems that local residents have to tolerate. It was acquired in 1993 and squatters broke in in October/November 1993. The terrified family next door contacted the agents many miles away in Guildford but received no response. Numerous telephone calls to the Department of Transport at Dorking and letters also resulted in no response. During this time the squatters arrived at any time day and night with loud music and drug pushing. Police patrolled but squatters used rear access along the motorway to escape raids. The Department of Transport officials at Dorking were very defensive and unco-operative, often with an unpleasant attitude with little or no concern for the problems of residents and their quality of life. Endless further delays and finally court action resulted in the squatters being evicted at the end of May this year, some six/seven months of absolute misery for local residents. As though this was not enough the Department of Transport and their managing agents left this property unsecured even after eviction and squatters made further attempts to break back into the premises."

Only after representations by the local authority and myself was priority given to the particular property—short-let tenants have now been installed.

Many people are surprised at the attitude of the Department of Transport to the public and local authorities. It seems to make little attempt to be user-sensitive or to try to understand the anxieties of local people. The upheaval caused by the planning and construction of a motorway is a traumatic experience for anyone. To add to that trauma, the problems of squatting, vandalism and drug-related activities is completely unacceptable in this day and age, and all the more so when those activities result from mismanagement on the part of the Department.

What Runnymede borough council finds so extraordinary about the whole matter is that it has devised a scheme to cope with homelessness in its area. It has developed an effective private partnership scheme under which private landlords make their properties available for families who would otherwise be homeless. The properties are handed back at the end of the tenancy agreement and the families are rehoused in other suitable properties. The properties are well looked after, there are no voids, there is a sensible income and homeless people get somewhere to live. All that shows a well-managed housing policy, and Runnymede offered to provide that service to the Department of Transport for the usual fees. No reply has been forthcoming.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend and I have the pleasure of sharing Runnymede borough council, which crosses our two constituencies. It really is a pleasure most of the time, but it has not been a pleasure during the planning stage of the link road. It has caused absolute havoc for people living in Thorpe and Egham—a very nice village and a very nice town. Many properties have been blighted and I hope that my right hon. Friend will mention that in his speech. It is almost impossible for people to move. People with a growing family who need an extra bedroom for the children find it impossible to get rid of their houses at anything other than knock-down prices. Devastation has been caused and the Department of Transport should be doing something about it.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who draws attention to the problems that his constituents share with mine. Over both our areas, about 120 properties have been acquired by the Department.

A local authority with a proven record on managing housing stock well and to the advantage of all concerned has been spurned by the Department. That has led to the problems and mismanagement that I have described and to the additional costs to the public purse that have been highlighted so well in the National Audit Office report.

4.7 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): It is difficult to know whether to congratulate or commiserate with the Leader of the House on surviving this morning's slaughter in Downing street.

I want to refer in this debate to two important decisions of this House still awaiting implementation, about each of which we are entitled to at least an oral ministerial statement before we rise for the summer recess. The first concerns the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill which, since I first presented it to the House for First Reading in 1991, has had over 40 hours of parliamentary debate. I am told that that is rather longer than it took to dispatch King Charles I.

In an attempt to end what is now being called the "filibuster of the century", the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) moved a motion on 29 April in the following terms:

"That, in the opinion of this House, Her Majesty's Ministers should provide sufficient time on the floor of the House before 27th May 1994 to allow all remaining stages of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill to be completed, and that sufficient time be provided before the end of the Session for the consideration of any Amendments to the Bill which may be made by the House of Lords."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1994; Vol. 242, c. 497.]

Like the Bill itself, the motion had strong backing in all parts of the House and it was approved, after nearly five hours of debate, without a single vote against.

A speech on the motion from the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People left the Bill's supporters here and all across Britain with high hopes that its Report stage, due the following Friday, was being approached by the Government in a spirit of honest endeavour to reach common ground with the Bill's all-party sponsors. Unless words had lost their meaning, it was said, the Minister was at the very least committed by that speech to ensure fair play at the Bill's Report stage on 6 May. But then came a rude awakening.

It was discovered that in fact the Minister, even before he spoke on the hon. Member for Exeter's motion, had already given instructions for the Bill to be destroyed. Within four days of the Minister's speech, 80 new amendments to the Bill were tabled en bloc, all in the names of five Conservative Members. The amendments were drafted for them, at taxpayers' expense, by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel on instructions given by the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People on 20 April, nine days before his speech of 29 April on the motion of the hon. Member for Exeter. Inevitably the effect of the amendments was to ensure that the Bill would be talked out on Report.

There were attempts at first to give the impression that the 80 amendments had been drafted by the five Members themselves. That impression was corrected by the Leader of the House in a parliamentary reply to me on 6 May, in which he confirmed that all the amendments were drafted

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. Subsequently there were two statements of unreserved apology for misleading the House in proceedings on the Bill: one by the Minister himself, and the other by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). But their statements were scant consolation for Britain's 6.5 million disabled people. For them, as they have since made clear to all Members, the wrecking of the Bill was an unforgivable act.

They feel deceived and betrayed. They point out that the Bill had the support of a clear majority of Members; that it had been given a Second Reading in the House of Lords on three occasions and completed all its stages there as long ago as November 1992; that the Bill's sponsors had consulted both very widely and in detail about its provisions; and that the response to that consultation had been strongly positive. They recall the motion of the hon. Member for Exeter and they regard the Government's failure to implement it as contemptuous of this House. Above all, they ask why, if the Government felt that their case was even remotely defensible, there was so much deceit and deception in responding to the Bill at a time when the Prime Minister was stressing his determination to restore

"the highest standards in public life."

The Leader of the House may say that we have now had the Minister's statement of last Friday and seen the consultative document. But that is no answer to disabled people who ask, in anguish and with anger, what trust they can ever have in Ministers who promise consultation while continuing even to ignore the opinion of the House of Commons itself. If they can ignore the House, whose preference for the Bill over all the alternatives was clearly expressed in its approval of the motion on 29 April, then whose opinions are they ever likely to accept if they differ from the Government's own? That is the question leading representatives of disabled people are asking after the Minister's statement last Friday. They complain bitterly of being forced to trade a good and viable Bill for a promissory note of little face value, let alone real value.

As Leader of the House, the right hon. Gentleman has a duty in this debate to respond to the very deeply felt concern among disabled people, more especially about the apparent futility of the parliamentary process when, as it seems to them, the decision taken by this House on 29 April has been so unceremoniously dumped by the Government and without any attempt at justification.

The right hon. Gentleman must know that the motion the House approved on 29 April was by no means extravagant. To opt for extravagance is not the way of the hon. Member for Exeter. All that his motion sought was an hour or so of parliamentary time to meet the strongly reaffirmed call from disabled people for full citizenship, and, as the hon. Member for Exeter said in moving the motion:

"We are not asking for the impossible or even for the original. Between 1951 and 1985, private Members' Bills were given Government time, of which 33 were granted extra time by Conservative Governments. Library records show that, between 1979 and 1986, four private Members' balloted Bills were given Government time. All those Bills show that, where there is a parliamentary will, there is a parliamentary way."—[*Official Report*, 29 April; Vol. 242, c. 505.]

It is still not too late for the Government to make the only worthwhile apology for their scandalously indefensible treatment of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. They can do so by honouring the decision taken by the House on 29 April. Time can still be found for the Bill's remaining stages before this Session ends, and I implore the right hon. Gentleman now to accept the will of the House as expressed by its approval of the motion of the hon. Member for Exeter.

The Government's treatment of that motion is not an isolated case. There is now the further case of the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on the welfare of the ex-service community, which the House approved on 1 July 1994. It is a motion in which I have an interest to declare, but not a financial one, as honorary parliamentary adviser to the Royal British Legion. My hon. Friend's motion was in the following terms:

"That this House, mindful of the increasing needs of the United Kingdom's ageing ex-service population and the many problems of younger members of the ex-service community in direct consequence of 'Options for Change', considers that there is now a pressing need for a sub-Department of Ex-Service Affairs within an existing Ministry and with a designated Minister to be responsible, as the only fundamental and long-term solution for the case and welfare of ex-service people and their dependants; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government now to respond positively to the Royal British Legion's urgent call for a sub-department to be established."

The issue addressed by that motion is one about which the ex-service community feels very strongly. This year's Royal British Legion conference, which spoke for 800,000 legion members, voted unanimously to press the Government to establish the sub-department.

At a time when bits and pieces of responsibility for ex-service affairs are scattered all over Whitehall, ex-service organisations want someone in Government to focus attention on all their concerns: a Minister in an existing Department who can provide full access to the whole Government through a single Whitehall door. They do not seek to emulate other countries with full-blown departments of state for veterans' affairs, but simply to make life easier for the ex-service community here in the UK—not least the war disabled and war bereaved—by achieving a modest and common-sense change in the machinery of government.

For ex-service organisations, in representing their members' interests, now to have to deal with 17 different Ministries is bureaucratic and inefficient, costly to the taxpayer, damaging to the reputations of Whitehall and Westminster, and hurtful to the ex-service community. Who can doubt that all the tension there was recently between the Government and the ex-service community over the 50th anniversary of D-day could have been avoided if there had been more sensitivity to and awareness of that community's wishes than could be achieved under existing arrangements?

In a parliamentary question to the Prime Minister, I asked

"if he will be meeting representatives of the Royal British Legion to discuss the approval by the House on 1 July of the resolution on the welfare of ex-service people; and what representation he has had from the Legion in regard to a meeting".

His answer was:

"We welcome continuing close contact with the Royal British Legion and other service organisations. A request for a meeting has been received from the Royal British Legion and is being considered at present."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 712.]

My question gave the Prime Minister an opportunity to assure the ex-service community that the Government recognise the importance to them of the decision taken by the House on 1 July; but his reply ignored the decision, even though the Royal British Legion's request to see him was expressly for the purpose of discussing that decision.

Not content with his response, I tabled a further parliamentary question to the Prime Minister requesting a clear statement of the Government's intentions. I asked him

"if it is his intention at present or at any time in the future to implement the Resolution of the House of 1 July on the welfare of ex-service people".

His reply of 15 July was:

"We have no such plans at present".—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. *778*.]

That reply will be widely seen, and not only in the ex-service community, as grossly unsatisfactory. It does nothing for the Government's reputation and is demeaning of this House. The Leader of the House, who made plain his respect for the ex-service organisations here last Thursday, must surely now recognise the concern provoked by the Government's contemptuous dismissal of the decision taken by the House to help their members. What on earth is the use of allocating parliamentary time for private Members' motions when, if they are approved, the Government act as if they had never been debated? Is that not to denigrate and diminish this House?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now arrange very urgently for oral ministerial statements on the Government's response to the motions approved both on the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill on 29 April and the welfare of the ex-service community on 1 July? In discharge of his responsibilities to all Members of the House, will he also do his best to ensure that the response in each case is both positive and worthy of the people whom the two motions sought to help? After all, they are people whose claims on the attention of this House deserve the highest priority.

4.21 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I welcome this opportunity and am grateful for the fact that I can make a speech about my constituency. The subject that I wish to address is important to my constituents, and, indeed, many hon. Members, on both sides of the House—local government reorganisation and the unfolding reports of the Local Government Commissioners.

As far as Hereford-Worcester is concerned, in the old county of Hereford, there is considerable concern about that. The detail of that concern can be made clear to the House, and I, and other hon. Members, hope to participate in the debates, which, I dare say, will come during the next Session and next year. But at this stage, in terms of the background of the 1972 reorganisation, before we get on to the present one, nothing produces such strong feelings—few things do—as interfering with people's local government boundaries. Within parties, it divides—Conservative against Conservative, Labour against Labour. It generates an awful lot of feeling across the country. We have been brave enough to embark on a further reform, and the message that I am giving is that, now that we have done so, we will have to finish it.

The county of Hereford was merged with Worcestershire in 1972. There was great uncertainty about before that time with the Redcliffe-Maude commission under the previous Labour Government. The intensity of feeling as a result nearly caused the loss of two Conservative seats. It is a relevant warning for the future. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has championed the cause of Herefordshire and, indeed, is associated with much of what I have to say. We need to know where we stand. We intend to conclude the inquiries and recommendations on which we have embarked. I would be grateful for any ministerial assurance that can be given along those lines.

The existing county of Hereford-Worcester has had a comparatively brief local government life of 20 years. It has worked very well. I am the only cross-border Member of Parliament, in the sense that my constituency is two thirds Herefordshire—the old county—and one third Worcestershire. Worcestershire has four times more people than Herefordshire and has been a very great support, not least over rural schools and libraries. All those things and the finance that comes from a good base in that regard can be used to support the rural areas.

My tribute to the existing county is very relevant to the proposals for change. The Local Government Commission has now delivered its first report; its recommendation, and two further options for the county of Hereford and Worcester, are in favour of a unitary authority of Herefordshire. A geographically vast and, indeed, beautiful area on the Welsh border—it has a population of some 162,000, while neighbouring Worcestershire's population is more than four times larger—will have everything except an obvious financial base.

Let me make two points to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, one specific and the other general. I shall not discuss the proposals for Worcestershire, save to say that my constituency includes Tenbury Wells, which —with the surrounding area—is affected by the proposals of the Local Government Commission.

I anticipate that Tenbury Wells will want a rural connection; in the context of the recommendations for Worcestershire, it may go for a two-tier Worcestershire authority, which would mean its being part of a Malvern Hills district council. I merely encourage Tenbury Wells to speak out to the commissioners. Household after household is currently receiving the recommendations, and being invited to participate in consultation.

The county of Herefordshire is cohesive and extremely historic. As I have said, it has everything but a good financial base. It is a vast area, and will clearly incur expense in delivering county services, however resourceful and ingenious the new council may be. If we create the new county—everyone wants it, including me—we shall have to finance it, which will mean a central Government grant formula that caters for the smaller and, in particular, the rural counties that we are creating.

I think—dare I say it—that this is a matter on which both sides of the House must agree: I have observed during my parliamentary life that a change of Government can mean an infinitesimal touch on the tiller, leading to a diminution of resources from the centre to, for instance, rural areas.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I hesitate to interfere in matters concerning Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Some of us, however, spent 177 hours in Committee Rooms 12 and 14 considering the Local Government etc.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

(Scotland) Bill. Many of the problems that the hon. Gentleman describes are just a year ahead, and how we are suffering.

Mr. Temple-Morris: This is not the first time that Scotland has been the precursor in terms of various local government events—if I may use suitably neutral phraseology. I always enjoy the hon. Gentleman's speeches, and I shall certainly try to read some of the proceedings on the Bill that he mentions.

In fact, the hon. Gentleman's intervention reinforces my view. I fear that if—for political or other reasons, some of which may be somewhat emotional—we create entities and are then not prepared to show the colour of our money by financing them, there will be nothing but trouble for the areas concerned. A rural area with a weak financial base is extremely vulnerable. I have said that locally, and I now say it nationally. There is little or no local padding when it comes to making up for any deficiency in central Government grant.

We have started the process; let us finish it. Whatever entity we create, if our creation depends on the centre it is the obligation and duty of the centre to finance it.

4.29 pm

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I want to raise a couple of issues that relate not just to my constituency but to the country generally. They are issues that should be brought to the attention of the House before it rises for the summer recess. We are about to begin what many members of the public assume will be holiday and leisure time for Members of Parliament. We know that most of that time will be spent working in our constituencies. Those of us with London constituencies do not leave this place very often, even during the summer.

One thing that many hon. Members may wish to do during the summer and which many people do is play cricket. Surrey county cricket club, which I am privileged to have in my constituency is currently doing extremely well, and I hope that it will go on to win something this year. I have just come from the Oval, where the House of Commons and the House of Lords cricket team is playing a South African ambassador's team as a celebration of South Africa being brought back into the international cricketing world.

An important development in Surrey county cricket club is the way in which it has increasingly tried to do more for young people in the area who want to get involved in playing cricket. In inner-city areas, cricket has sometimes been seen as an elitist game, but Surrey county cricket club is trying to ensure that it is not viewed in that way, but is seen as a game that many of our young people, particularly from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, can play. There have been good developments at Surrey on that.

The freehold of the Oval is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. That means that the Duchy of Cornwall—indeed, the heir to the throne—has a great deal of control over what the cricket club can do. Surrey county cricket club has been trying for some time to purchase the freehold, because it would like to have control of its own destiny. It is a famous ground and it should be able to develop further, in the interests of cricket locally and nationally and for the good of the local community in my constituency.

Unfortunately, the Duchy of Cornwall is not keen to sell the freehold. It is not that it is not used to selling things. Since I was elected as the Member of Parliament for Vauxhall in 1989, the Duchy has sold off all its housing in Kennington. Admittedly, it has sold it to a housing association, and a large amount of that housing has stayed in social ownership. I pay tribute to the Duchy for the way in which it handled that sale. However, it refuses to enter into negotiations about selling the Oval freehold.

Early-day motion 1552 has been tabled today with cross-party support. It has nearly 50 signatures already, and we hope that, by the end of the week, it will have substantially more, because we feel that, in this day and age, as we move into the next century, it is quite wrong for an individual and the Duchy of Cornwall to have control over whether Surrey county cricket club wishes to put on a new door handle, put a screw in a particular place or build something new in the interests of local people. Every time it wants to do anything, it has to obtain Duchy approval, Duchy architects have to be paid for and the costs are increasing. It is disgraceful.

I hope that, by my bringing this to the attention of the House, all those people who love cricket will use whatever influence they have to persuade the Duchy to sell the freehold to Surrey. If that happened, Surrey county cricket club would be able to celebrate its 150th anniversary next year with a present from His Royal Highness Prince Charles.

The second issue I want to raise is also a leisure activity, but not something with which I am involved. Those who know me may find it unusual that I intend to raise the issue of pubs, publicans and the brewery industry, because I am not known to frequent the bars of the House. However, I have many pubs in my constituency, and I recognise what a focal point they are in the community for social activity. I was delighted to sponsor the Vauxhall "pub of the year" award.

Luckily, or unluckily, many Members of Parliament live in my constituency, and when they are not busily engaged in their duties here, they frequent the pubs there. As the House rises for the summer recess, thereby giving hon. Members a greater opportunity to visits pubs in their own constituencies, I draw to the House's attention the plight of many landlords and landladies who are picked on and exploited by the major breweries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has been actively pursuing this issue, and many hon. Members have been lobbied by pub tenants. A large public meeting was organised recently by the very effective South London Licensed Victuallers Protection Association. Publicans from all over south London attended to find out how they could lobby more effectively.

Under the beer orders that the Government introduced a few years ago, the number of properties tied to each brewery was supposed to be limited to 2,000. The orders were intended to reduce monopoly control of the market, increase competition and diversity, and benefit the customer and the long-term interests of the industry. Those measures have clearly failed.

The brewing giants have effectively invested their money in lawyers and corporate strategists not only to get around the intention of the beer orders but to tighten and further restrict the operation of high street pub retail outlets. The situation now is even worse than before the introduction of the beer orders, which at best have been

woefully ineffective and at worst have colluded in aiding the interests of the brewers against those of the pub tenant and customer.

Although breweries were supposed to be limited to 2,000 tied houses each, they found a convenient way to get around the law. Grand Metropolitan swapped its brewing interest, Watney Truman, for the estate of Courage. It set up Inntrepreneur Ltd. and became a 50:50 partner in some 15,000 pubs. Whitbread and Bass also started leasing companies. Many times the supposed 2,000 limit for tied houses are still contractually tied to the same brewery—but now, under even more draconian, unfair and anti-competitive practices.

Publicans face absurd minimum purchase orders, despite the current recession in the pub trade, which is especially acute in areas such as that which I represent. If pub tenants fail to sell an often unrealistically large amount of their brewer's beer, they have to pay a heavy cash penalty—about £83 a barrel in many cases.

That loophole has led to the absurd situation of one publican I know having had four different corporate landlords in just five months even though he is still tied to the same brewery, paying the same extortionate rent and the same minimum purchase order penalty. The price that pub tenants have to pay for the beer they do manage to sell is also often far higher than that at which the same sales representative of the same brewery sells to neighbouring pubs.

Rents for tied houses are also skyrocketing—increases of 100 to 150 per cent. have been common on south London, and some are even greater. The rents are out of proportion to the declining value of properties and the market rents for similar sized shops or other businesses. Because of dubious valuations, one estimate of the worth of Grand Metropolitan's share of the pub empire is £150 million more than its real market value. That suggests to me that, in a world of high finance, there is another motive for continuing the anti-competitive monopolistic practices.

To use a pun, the only reason that tenants continue to put up with this appalling situation is that the breweries have them over a barrel. Tenants have often invested their life savings in their businesses; to walk away would be to invite bankruptcy, abandon all they have worked for, and make themselves homeless. For many people in their fifties, it could mean being unemployed for the rest of their lives. Even so, bankruptcy and financial ruin are common, as breweries drain the last drop of cash from vulnerable tenants. Typically, suicide among publicans is on the increase.

I would usually give more details of the heavy-handed, bully-boy tactics of the brewery giants, but some tenants who attended meetings in the House were shortly afterwards visited by brewery managers, who threatened them for making trouble with their Members of Parliament. Test cases are currently before the courts, disputing the legality of some of the anti-competitive practices, so I shall not go into further detail of individual cases. The European Commission has also been considering a number of complaints, and is firmly of the opinion that the responsibility for sorting out the mess lies with our national Government.

I hope that, before the summer recess, the Government will get the message that a full review of the legislative and regulatory framework of the brewing industry is urgently needed. The beer orders have been tried, and have been seen to fail. I call on the Government to investigate minimum purchase orders, excessive rent increases, over-valuation of properties, and the monopoly exploitation of tied house contracts.

When hon. Members visit pubs in their constituencies in the summer, they should ask the publican what is happening to him. I believe that they will then return to the House determined to get the Government to do something about the wholly unjust beer orders.

4.40 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), who has conjured up summery pictures of cricket fields and of the consumption of beer. Like me, she is clearly in favour of a summer Adjournment, and of leisure—even if we do not always get as much of that during the recess as others may think. I am happy to follow her down that route.

I am a fan of Martyn Lewis, who is a proponent of good news—as some hon. Members will know, he spoke to the all-party media committee not long ago—and I welcome the opportunity to refer briefly to one or two encouraging trends over the past few months. That should counterbalance much that I—and, I am sure, others—have found negative about current political debate. I do not criticise any particular organisation or party, but I have detected a slight negativity, so in my short speech I shall refer to one or two positive factors.

First, I compliment the Government on the "Front Line First" announcement earlier this week. It contained good news for all of us who are keen on the reserve forces. Having read in the press that there might be further cuts in the reserves, we have now heard that their numbers will be held to 59,000, which is most welcome.

Originally, I had hoped to have the opportunity to debate that subject at greater length later tonight, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Unfortunately, that will not now happen—for two reasons. First, my calculations show that there will not be time. Secondly, my hon. Friend may now have other things on his mind. I wish him well in his new appointment, which we have heard about today—and a very important appointment it is, too.

The announcement about the reserve forces was good news, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will get the message through to the Secretary of State for Defence that it was much appreciated. Will he also ensure that the promised legislation on the reserve forces, which has been written about during the last few months, will be introduced in the Queen's Speech?

If we are to encourage the reserve forces, we need to re-examine the employment implications, in terms both of employment security and of encouragement for employers to release people who are doing that worthwhile job, as members of our Territorial Army or our other voluntary reserves. I hope that my right hon. Friend will do all he can to ensure that there will be an announcement in the Queen's Speech about a Bill to update the law on the reserve forces. I trust that that point will be taken on board and passed on.

I shall now deal with something totally different. Over the past two years I, like millions of other people, have been encouraged by the success of the radio station Classic FM, which is now two years old. I see that my hon. Friend the Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household is shaking his head. He may not be in favour of Classic FM—[HON.

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

MEMBERS: "Radio 1."]—but I am, and I am willing to debate with anyone the virtues of Classic FM and the appalling nature of Radio—*[Interruption.]* No; my hon. Friends will be encouraged to hear that I shall be brief.

Classic FM now has about 5 million listeners; that is good news. The point that I wish to make—not at length, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although it is well worth making—is that, even in the commercial world, there is scope for success when the taste of the British public is respected rather than despised. Trendy individuals from places such as Islington, and other places that I have never visited and do not really understand, seem to have rather a low opinion of public taste, but the success of Classic FM shows what happens when public taste is respected.

People in this country have a real interest in good music, in good art, and in science, which is my particular interest. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) for all the excellent work that he has done for science and the scientific community while he has had ministerial responsibility for science. When I move among the scientific community, I have no doubt that there is much support and respect for his work in that area. I hope that that remark has the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: In the view of many of us, it is absolutely absurd—so long as there is a Conservative Government—to move the right hon. Gentleman from that post at this stage in developments on the White Paper. Why on earth shift him at this stage?

Mr. Thompson: I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman down that road, but I do not retract my remarks about the work that my right hon. Friend has done for science.

In a scientific context, there is no more popular subject than astronomy. As a schoolteacher for many years, I was involved in running astronomy societies. Hon. Members may ask why I move on from science to refer to astronomy. The reason is straightforward. This week we have seen newspaper headlines about the collision caused by the comet Shoemaker Levy, travelling at about 135 mph, crashing into the planet Jupiter. That is a remarkable event, and I could talk about it at length, but hon. Members on both sides of the House will be relieved to know that I shall not do so.

My point, which links with what I said earlier about music and art, is that the study of astronomy and of other sciences is popular at all levels in society, and that that encourages a rational approach to the problems of society. That provides a counterbalance. I remember, when I was young, reading that when there was an eclipse of the sun, people in Africa banged drums to drive the evil dragon away. I regard that as equivalent to the nonsense about astrology that we can now read in the tabloids every day.

I favour the rational approach of astronomy, which is why I mention all the news about the comet and about Jupiter, which I find of great interest. However, hon. Members need not worry; I shall not speak for too long, but the subject is important—*[Interruption.]* I know the hon. Member for Walsall, North well enough to know that he will support what I say about a rational approach to society's problems.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Yes.

Mr. Thompson: It is part of the process of education to encourage detached observation and analysis of phenomena. If that had not taken place over the years, civilisation would not have progressed; and that progress will not continue unless we all encourage a detached, scientific analytical approach to the problems that we face. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will recognise, even if no one else does, that I am making a serious point—and one that is also valid in the context of our parliamentary debates.

I do not want to make too much of my final comment, but it is sad that observation of the parliamentary process by the media now seems to be propelled by forces other than the detached approach that was taken in the past—in 1948 or in 1958, for example. I have done some research and made comparisons, using *The Times*, *The Guardian* and all the other newspapers. Hon. Members will be pleased to hear that I am not going to go into all that research in detail, but I have studied the approach in 1948, 1958, 1968, 1988 and 1994.

There has been a change from that detached approach. Dare I say that gossip, and ego trips for some journalists in the privileged surroundings here, seem to have taken over? My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, in a recent letter to *The Times*, appealed for the restoration of that newspaper as a newspaper of record. I fear that, under its present ownership, there is little prospect of that.

4.48 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This week sees marches and rallies in this country and in many countries throughout the world in remembrance of the brutal invasion of the island of Cyprus by the Turkish army 20 years ago. I am sure that every hon. Member is aware that Cyprus is a member of the British Commonwealth, and that we are one of the guarantor powers for that island.

I know that there are hon. Members on both sides, to their credit, who have been deeply involved in Cyprus since that invasion. They, like me, have seen the continuing talks over the years, during which hopes were built up that, at long last, there would be an honourable settlement, only to see those hopes destroyed—due, without doubt, to the attitude of Mr. Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot spokesman, and the attitude of the Turkish Government in Ankara.

During all these years, we have seen action after action by Mr. Denktash to delay and to destroy any discussion that would lead to the unification of the island. We have seen the actions he has taken and the actions that he still supports. There are thousands of Turkish troops in the occupied northern area of Cyprus and many thousands of Turkish settlers have been brought into northern Cyprus.

Some years ago, we saw the establishment of the so-called "independent state of Northern Cyprus", a state that is recognised only by Turkey of all the countries in the world. To the credit of this Government, they have never been prepared to recognise that independent state created by Mr. Denktash.

Recently, we have had the confidence-building measures under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Sadly, they have got nowhere. Recently, the Secretary-General has clearly said whom he blames for the lack of progress in the talks for which he has been responsible. Against that background of 20 years, one

has the right to ask where the British Government stand and what action they will take so that meaningful progress can begin to be made.

I am a member of the Council of Europe. Two years ago, a Spanish deputy, Mr. Cuco, a member of the Council of Europe, was requested by the Council to produce a report on the illegal settlers in northern Cyprus. He clearly stated in his report that the presence of the illegal settlers in the north of the island would make a settlement far more difficult. He also clearly said that the people brought from mainland Turkey were deeply resented by true Turkish Cypriots.

Despite that report, and despite all the years during which the Turkish mainland settlers were brought to northern Cyprus, what did the British Government do? The answer, clearly and regrettably, is nothing.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The hon. Gentleman above all is the great champion, quite rightly, of this good cause. Does he agree that the island must be united to be properly economically viable, and that the Turkish Government should now heed international public opinion? The sooner the island is reunited, the better for all of us.

Mr. Cox: I totally agree with the hon. Member. He also has a superb record on Cyprus. He has given me the opportunity to make this point. Whichever party we belong to, we work for a united Cyprus. We do not work for the benefit of the Greek Cypriots. We work for a united Cyprus for the benefit of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots whose home is on the island of Cyprus. The hon. Gentleman is so right in his comments.

I recently attended a meeting in Strasbourg of the political affairs committee of the Council of Europe. The committee had invited representatives of the political parties in Cyprus—the Greek parties and the Turkish parties—to come to Strasbourg to outline what they saw as a possible settlement.

It was extremely regrettable that, within moments of the Turkish Cypriot representatives starting to speak, it became clear that they did not want a settlement. They made comments such as, "Turkish troops under no circumstances will leave the island." They also said that, if Turkey became a member of the European Union, the Turkish Cypriots would do everything in their power to obstruct and cause problems if Cyprus was allowed to become a member of the European Union.

I have to say that the Prime Minister's statement in the House on the recent Corfu summit, on 27 June, in which he replied to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), has given great comfort to Mr. Denktash and to Turkey. The Prime Minister said that, unless there was a settlement, Cyprus would not be supported in its application for entry to the European Union.

I shall read out a few brief quotations that will clearly show the House the attitude that Turkey repeatedly takes on the issue of Cyprus. The speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, addressing a meeting of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce on 25 April this year, said:

"Turkey's rights in Cyprus stem from International Law and the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus is a consequence of this. Turkey cannot endanger itself with regard to the Cyprus issue without any return."

Mr. Denktash, to whom I have already referred, said of the Greek Cypriots on a radio programme on 10 May this year:

"If they become EU members then as of their membership date we join Turkey and the issue ends there. The Turkish Grand National Assembly should enact a resolution and declare our union with Turkey the very moment that the Greek Cypriots become an EU members. There is no other alternative."

The final quotation is from Mr. Ecevit, the leader of the Democratic party of Turkey. He said in an interview on 25 June this year:

"On 20 July 1974 peace came to Cyprus. As far as the Turkish Cypriots are concerned the problem was solved that day."

Against that background, what action are the Government to take? I again remind the House that we are one of the guarantor powers of the island of Cyprus. For years, many of us, irrespective of party, who have questioned the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of the day have been told that the British Government fully support the efforts of the United Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations recently expressed his views. Do we support those views? If we do, surely now is the time for the Government to act and to support his work.

In a decision by the European Court of Justice taken earlier this month, bans were imposed against any Turkish Cypriot citrus fruits and potatoes being allowed into countries of the European Union. I ask the Leader of the House whether the British Government support that ruling. If they do, I hope that they will say so, loud and clear.

Twenty years have passed. Cyprus is the only country in Europe that is still divided by a wall: that is the tragic indictment of the lack of meaningful progress over those long 20 years in resolving the tragedy of Cyprus. When shall we hear the Government's views and their proposals for ending the tragedy? When shall we see the reunification of the island of Cyprus?

As the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said, and as I said in my reply to him, all of us in the House who are interested in the future of Cyprus are interested in the people of Cyprus, be they Greek or Turkish Cypriots. We look for answers from the Government to end this continuing tragedy, which has brought such appalling poverty and problems, certainly to northern Cyprus, and which has brought great heartache to the people of Cyprus. When will that tragedy end, and when will the island of Cyprus be reunited? When will the prosperity that it can achieve start to be developed?

4.59 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): While not agreeing with everything that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said, I must say that no hon. Member has fought so vigorously over many years for his Cypriot constituents as the hon. Gentleman.

Before the House rises, I wish to raise a matter under the Financial Services Act 1986. As the House will recall, the Act was, in the words of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury as recently as 3 May 1994 in a letter to me:

"to provide a high standard of protecton for investors".

Under the Act, the Securities and Investments Board was set up as the overall umbrella, and a whole series of self-regulating organisations such as FIMBRA—the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation—were set up under that board.

Recently, a new body to embrace all those self-regulating organisations—the Personal Investment

[Sir Anthony Grant]

Authority—was set up. After a rather shaky start, it began operating on only Monday this week. It has received 3,666 applications for membership, and I have been told that 1,139 firms have been admitted. I am glad that a firm in my constituency, Stuart and Verity, was one of the first to be admitted.

The problem arises over a firm which describes itself in an advertisement as:

"Britain's Leading Retirement Income Specialists".

I refer to the firm of Knight Williams and Co. Ltd. The company says that it handles £500 million-worth of investments for 24,000 people. I should make it absolutely clear at the start that I am not making any accusations whatever of any dishonesty on the part of that firm. However, I wish to draw attention to the difficulties that a great number of people have experienced over the years, having used the firm's services.

In advertisements in 1989 and 1990, the firm made statements such as:

"We can help you earn a high regular monthly income"

and

"We can show you how to provide for the capital growth you will need to keep pace with the cost of living over the coming years".

A nice Larry cartoon showed a post man trying to put a fat cheque through the letter box and the key point made by the firm was that it would provide income, growth and peace of mind.

On the basis of those advertisements, my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Jordan, a retired couple, invested some £32,500 in January 1990, and also paid £5,500 in initial charges. After four and a half years, their investment is worth £27,300, so they have lost substantially on any basis. They are deeply concerned about, and have investigated, the way in which Knight Williams conducts its affairs. That has attracted the attention of the press.

In February 1994, *The Sunday Telegraph* carried out a considerable investigation and pointed out:

"An IFA"—

independent financial adviser—

"is meant to recommend products from across the market. But most of Knight Williams' new business ends up in its own unit trusts. These carry some of the highest charges in the unit trust industry—6.375 per cent. initial and 2.5 per cent. annual".

A minute from the firm described how its salesmen should operate. One of the categories of salesmen listed was:

"the 'Clever Dick' who 'sells non KW', is 'disruptive' and a 'compliance nightmare'."

The minute says that the way to deal with such salesmen is to make them toe the line. The article in *The Sunday Telegraph* included the view taken by a leading stock broker:

"It must be difficult for a Knight Williams salesman not to recommend in-house products. These funds may perform well in spite of high charges but are they a function of independent financial advice? I fear not".

Lest it should seem that I am engaged in an attack on a rival of any sort, I declare an interest in Barclays bank which is a financial adviser. But there is no question whatever of any competition or rivalry in that respect; it is entirely a constituency matter which I am raising.

My constituents referred the matter to the SIB and FIMBRA, but the only course that could be taken under the rules was to go to arbitration. In his evidence to the Treasury Select Committee, Mr. Jordan said:

"The process of arbitration is a veritable minefield fraught with difficulties for lay people. It is, for better or worse, an adversarial procedure which means that independent financial advisers defending a complaint from a lay member of the public are able to flex their legal and financial muscles because only they have the necessary economic resources to do so."

If the unfortunate investor fails before arbitration, the SIB can only suggest that he has recourse through the courts, which is enormously expensive. The SIB can give orders to FIMBRA only if it has breached its rules, and FIMBRA can punish the company in question only if it has breached the rules. My constituent therefore ran up against a brick wall.

Since then, more than 40 Members of Parliament have received similar complaints from their constituents about Knight Williams. Most of the constituents are elderly retired people who are seeking to provide for their old age by following the advice given by that firm. So far as I could work out from letters from hon. Members, nearly all the constituents have suffered financial losses in the process. I have taken the matter up—as, indeed, have more than 40 hon. Members—with the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, who has taken a close interest in the matter. The Treasury Select Committee has also taken a close interest in the matter, and it has had evidence, certainly from my constituent, which it is carefully considering.

As a result of the concerns expressed not only by me but by many other hon. Members, an early-day motion was tabled yesterday in the name of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and other distinguished hon. Members, expressing the House's concern at the number of complaints received by hon. Members from their constituents, many of whom are retired people, and the apparent inability of SIB and/or FIMBRA to bring full light to bear on the subject. I should make it clear that although the PIA is now operating, it is not taking over earlier cases; they must be cleared up by the old self-regulating organisations. Early-day motion 1545 also urged the Government to institute a thorough inquiry into the whole matter.

Without making any accusations of dishonesty, I am asking my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to urge the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to pursue his inquiries to bring light to bear on the whole matter in the interests of a large number of constituents, to examine the way in which the Financial Services Act is operating and to question whether there is any better way in which redress can be obtained for these unfortunate constituents.

5.9 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Before the House adjourns, I should like to urge upon the Government the need for a strategy for breast cancer, both at health care and research level.

I am the joint chair of a newly formed all-party group on breast cancer. During the past few months we have taken evidence from some of the most eminent clinicians and scientists. Their evidence has led me to conclude that the interests of patients would be best served if the Government took the approach of establishing a national action plan on breast cancer, similar to that established in America last year.

Breast cancer is a major killer of women in this country. One in 12 women are affected by it and nearly 30,000 new cases are diagnosed every year, which is about 480 a week. Nearly 16,000 deaths occur every year, which is equivalent to one woman dying every 30 minutes. Worldwide, the

figures are no better. It is the biggest cancer killer in the world, with 250,000 deaths a year from breast cancer. Those are devastating statistics.

What is even more worrying is the growth in that disease. Some weeks ago, Professor Baum of the Royal Marsden hospital told our committee :

"We are losing the war against breast cancer. Any modest improvements in case survival or mortality rates are being eclipsed by the real increase in the incidence of the disease. Sadly the foot soldiers in this war are the women themselves and I am convinced that if the battle is to be won in the long term then the lay public have to be reminded well in advance of them developing the disease that the responsibility for seeking its cure must be shared between the public and the profession alike."

This week, Professor Gusterson of the Institute of Cancer Research and Professor Adrian Harris of the John Radcliffe hospital, Oxford, put to the all-party group the case for a national action plan on breast cancer and they were extremely convincing. They referred to what happened in America after a petition from 2.6 million Americans calling for a comprehensive plan to end the breast cancer epidemic was presented to President Clinton.

Shortly afterwards, President Clinton announced that the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, would convene a conference to develop a national action plan on breast cancer. From its inception, that conference was intended to involve the whole spectrum of individuals, groups and organisations concerned with this awful disease.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most alarming things that the professors told us on Tuesday was not only that the money spent on research into cancer in Britain was less than that spent in America and other European countries, but that although the majority of funding in those countries is provided by their Governments, only one tenth of British funding is provided by our Government while nine tenths comes from charity? Is that not appalling? It is also borne out in Scotland, where, of 11 consultant oncologists—too small a number in itself—seven are funded by charities.

Mrs. Mahon: I agree with my hon. Friend. All those consultants should be funded by the national health service if they are treating national health patients.

Invitations to the conference in America were sent to 150 representatives from advocacy groups, consumers, academics, scientists, educationists, health care specialists as well as to people who had suffered from breast cancer. The participants worked together in a unique, unprecedented partnership and produced an excellent policy document entitled "A National Action Plan on Breast Cancer", containing eminently sensible suggestions which make an effort to tackle the epidemic.

Even more exciting was the fact that, following the conference, the United States Department of Defence produced a grant of $210 million for a breast cancer research programme and within a short time that plan was up and running. What a wonderful way to spend the peace dividend—as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) has said, the comparison with the amount of money devoted to research in Britain should make us ashamed of the pittance that is offered here.

The problem with funding research in Britain is, as my hon. Friend said, that it is mainly offered by charities and is not supplied by the Government. In any event, that source of Government revenue is badly affected in a recession. An added problem has been caused by the introduction of changes in the NHS and the fragmentation of a national comprehensive service. Professor Harris told our group that another worrying factor for people who want to conduct research into this killer disease is that trusts are now reluctant to store material from biopsies in pathology laboratories because of the cost of storage. That valuable material will, however, be needed urgently for future research.

I hope to persuade the all-party cancer group that we should launch a national petition to get the Government to adopt a national plan on breast cancer. Something urgent needs to be done to combat a major killer of women in this country. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to raise this important matter before the House adjourns.

5.16 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): A year ago, on the last day of the summer term, I raised in an Adjournment debate the immense problems facing the British brewing industry —in which I declare a modest interest—arising from, among other problems, the ridiculous burden of excise duty on beer which our European competitors do not have to carry. That burden is seriously weakening the industry.

Since that debate, I must unhappily report that the situation has not improved. The industry—of which my Burton constituency is, of course, the centre, with great names such as Ind Coope, Marstons and Bass—employs 3,000 of my constituents directly and many thousands indirectly. It also plays a vital part in Britain's economy because, in all, it employs about 900,000 people—more than the number employed in the construction industry, three times as many as in the energy and water industries and five times the number in the motor industry.

Consumers spend £13.5 billion a year on beer, which is more than they spend on cars, clothing, electricity, gas, coal and all sorts of other durable goods. The industry provides Government with £4.3 billion a year, which is equivalent to 3p on income tax. The British pub is a national institution, which is patronised by one third of adults once a week, and 70 per cent. of tourists prefer the British pub to their own bars back home.

The British brewing industry has doubled its output in the past five years; yet we are penalising it—and ourselves —excessively and unjustly. Alarmingly, as beer sales through the on-trade have fallen by 27 per cent.—from 38 million barrels in 1979 to 28 million today—beer duty has gone up 36 per cent. and the sales taxes beer by 59 per cent. while wine and spirits have enjoyed an almost equivalent decrease in tax and beer duty paid by our European partners has remained static.

We in Britain consume 21 per cent. of all the beer drunk in the European Community; yet we pay 55 per cent. of the Community's beer duty. That is preposterous. There is no doubt that taxation is a major cause—I accept that it is not the only cause—of the decline in the market. Germans pay only 4p a pint in beer duty, the French and the Belgians pay 5p and 8p respectively, but we in Britain are required to pay 33p. That enormous differential and the fact that the limit for personal imports from France and elsewhere on the continent has risen to 110 litres—that is the amount that each of us can bring into the United Kingdom for personal consumption—has brought about the phenomenon of cross-border shopping.

Passenger car movements via Dover rose by 12 per cent. in the first quarter of this year. More people than ever are

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

buying their beer abroad. Truckloads of beer, purchased by Britons in Calais, are being brought back to the UK and British beer sales in pubs throughout the country have fallen by 1 million pints a day. It appears that 39 per cent. of licensees believe that the importation of beer has affected the use of their pubs; 26 per cent. of them have seen a decrease in their trade, 31 per cent. of them say that if the problem continues and grows they will reduce staff hours, 24 per cent. say that they will work even longer hours and 18 per cent. say that they will move out of the business.

Even more alarming is the growth of criminal bootlegging. On 18 May *The Independent* quoted a Customs and Excise investigator who said:

"When the single market opened up on 1 January 1993 the trade in cheap beer was carried out by young Jack the lads flogging the stuff at car boot sales. But now organised criminals are involved with outlets at nightclubs, off licences, working mens' clubs and illicit drinking dens."

The seriousness of that aspect was confirmed last week to the Select Committee on Home Affairs by the head of the national criminal intelligence service, whose main concern is organised crime. This new situation is serious and it is becoming worse.

The Government have helped a little, but hardly enough. In the past year, since my previous short debate, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was worried by cross-border shopping, has ensured that there has been no increase in duty on beer or spirits. He took that decision in last year's Budget, when there was only a 1.9 per cent. increase in duty on any alcoholic drink. The Government have also been trying to increase the harmonisation of excise duties at the Council of Ministers. Realistically, however, any plea to other countries to raise their excise duties to the levels which prevail in the UK is unlikely to fall on receptive ears. Nor do we want to remove from nation states the right to fix their own tax rates.

What can be done to stop the decline in our brewing industry? My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General told me in a letter that I received two days ago that Customs and Excise has calculated that a reduction in excise duty to French and German levels would lead to Revenue receipt losses of between £3 billion and £4 billion. Clearly that could not be countenanced.

The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association—the successor to the Brewers Society—commissioned the Henley centre to establish the accuracy of the Customs and Excise assessment. The centre found that a 50 per cent. reduction in duty to 16p would lead to a price reduction which would reverse the downward trend in the beer market and substantially increase revenues other than beer tax by, for example, increasing employment in brewing, clubs and pubs as well as in the supply of goods and services by a total of about 90,000 by 1999.

At the same time, it would reduce the duty lost to the UK by payments of duty to France, Germany and elsewhere and generate an additional £300 million for the Government by 1997. It would benefit the Exchequer by £1 billion by 1999. The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association and the brewers themselves have observed that when on two previous occasions this century Governments reduced beer duty to revive sales—by 37 per cent. in 1933 and 28 per cent. in 1959—the beer sales market turned up and the industry returned to long-term growth.

Before the House rises for the summer recess, I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to invite my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Customs and Excise to look again at their figures in the light of the work undertaken by the Henley centre and to consider whether it is possible to reverse the decline in the brewing industry by a 50 per cent. cut in beer duty. Apart from the gratitude of the industry and of my constituents who depend on the industry, they would have the thanks of the all-party beer group, whose members care very much about the problem.

5.27 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As we are soon to embark on a long summer recess, it would surely have been appropriate for the Prime Minister to make a statement about the likely new President of the European Commission. I see in their places my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith), who raised the matter in points of order. It seems that they agree with me.

The Prime Minister made much of the fact that he vetoed the candidate he did not like, the Prime Minister of Belgium. He gave the impression that that candidate's views were unacceptable. It is interesting that the person who is now likely to be the new President has made it clear that he shares entirely all the views of the candidate who was vetoed by the Prime Minister, including those on a single currency, more integration and a federal Europe.

Those are the views of Mr. Santer, who is likely to be the new President. If he holds views identical to those of Mr. Dehaene, who was vetoed—he admits he does—why should he be approved by the British Government?

We can come to the conclusion only that as on so many other matters concerning the European Union the Government are prepared to give in—in this instance they did so within a few days—after a display of opposition.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the most recent development? I gather that, within the past few minutes, the British Labour group has voted to reject Mr. Santer.

Mr. Winnick: It will be interesting to see the reaction of the Government. As I have said, if one candidate has been vetoed because of his views, there is no reason why someone else who holds identical views on the future of the European Union should be supported. The attitude of the British Labour Members of the European Parliament may be somewhat different from mine in some respects, but in this instance there may be some consistency. The Government show no consistency.

As we go into the long summer recess, we know that the Government's standing—certainly domestically—is extremely low. We saw that clearly in the Euro and local elections. No one would dispute the fact that the results were not good for the Government.

The Government no doubt think that the reshuffle will help them, but most British people could not care less who is the Minister for this or the Secretary of State for that. They are concerned only about policies and their own position. As most people have been penalised in the past 12

or 18 months by all kinds of extra expenditure, including tax increases, it is understandable that they do not look favourably on the Government, and are unlikely to do so in the future.

Those who earn the most are increasingly rewarding themselves with even more money. Signal workers would have been willing to settle for about 5 per cent., but the Government vetoed that. Had they agreed to it, the dispute could have been settled and today's disruption to train services avoided.

The *Guardian* index of top executive pay shows that, in the past year, top directors have received average increases of nearly 25 per cent., and even more in some cases. Seven directors receive more than £1 million a year. Last year, Mr. Peter Wood of the Royal Bank of Scotland received £18.5 million. I hope that he somehow manages to make ends meet.

The chief executive of SmithKline Beecham receives some £2 million a year while Glaxo, Barclays, Tompkins, and Kingfisher pay their top directors more than the £1 million mark. The chief executive of Cadbury Schweppes must have felt hard done by, because he received a percentage increase of just under 100 per cent. last year and now gets £852,000 a year. Top directors also receive performance bonuses, generous pensions contributions and share options, which sometimes amount to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The comparison is so obvious. While those in the public sector have had increases of some 2 per cent.—many people in the private sector have not received much more, and some have had no increase whatever—those on the highest incomes have received substantial increases, despite the fact that the Prime Minister said that he did not approve of them. It seems all the more unfair when the Government are pursuing a wage restraint policy against signalmen and others in the public sector.

Nor should we forget that some of the top earners receive generous assistance when they leave their posts. Only last week, it came to light that the former managing director of Midlands Electricity departed with a compensation and pension package of some £655,000 and share options worth an additional £483,000—over the £1 million mark. Can such generous treatment be justified? The former chairman of the water authority in my area received, on leaving the company, £230,300, plus £500,000 more in compensation for early retirement.

That shows only too well that those with substantial incomes not only receive generous pay increases but, when they leave, they receive the sort of sums that I have mentioned. It is understandable that there is a lot of resentment. Some people may say that it is purely Labour envy but, while the Conservative Members are so strenuously against any form of minimum income and repeat time and again that it is out of the question, they appear to have no objection to maximum incomes. They never deplore the increases in pay to top earners in British industry. Indeed, they show no concern whatever.

The Low Pay Unit found that more than 44 per cent. of the work force in the west midlands were on low pay. That is 4 per cent. higher than the national average. The fact that some 855,000 employees in the west midlands earn less than the low-pay threshold helps to explain the poverty and near-poverty in which hundreds of thousands of people in our community are forced to live.

It is wrong that there should be such a gulf between those who are penalised by unemployment, when employers simply say, "Take it or leave it," while at the other end of the income scale the fat cats reward themselves, often without justification, with increases such as I have described. Once again, it illustrates the Government's philosophy: indifference to the plight of those on low pay and total opposition to a minimum income policy, but no willingness to take action against those on the highest incomes. I felt that it was only right to raise such matters before we go into the summer recess.

5.36 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I wish to speak briefly about the problem of deregulation. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has heard me speak on this matter too often to find it amusing.

I was on the Committee that discussed the deregulation Bill upstairs for many days, and in the Chamber on Report and Third Reading. Throughout the Bill's Committee, Report and Third Reading stages, I fully supported all the Bill's objectives. It was a first-class attempt by a Conservative Government to do exactly what we should be doing—strip out some of the more absurd and idiotic regulations. I welcomed, as did many other people, the power which the Bill gave the state to take away those regulations, and I make no excuses for thoroughly supporting that great concept. Hon. Members should be ever vigilant against the over imposition of regulations.

That important Bill is now going through another place. During its passage through this place, I raised the plight of small businesses, and suggested a remedy that had not been included in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) and I raised the matter both in Committee on 28 April and on Report on the Floor of the House. I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to the new clause that we tabled on Report, which appears in the *Official Report* of 23 May in columns 45-46.

The new clause sought to give business men and women redress against the unfair imposition by officials of regulations which lead to the eventual closure of their businesses. It also sought to give them redress against the imposition of such financial stringency that their businesses either become uncompetitive or eventually close down because, over a prolonged period, those excesses prevent them from trading competitively.

Sometimes that is the result of a misunderstanding or a misrepresentation of a regulation, but at other times it is because a regulation has been wilfully imposed on them without any regard for the true nature of the regulation. Either way, the reality remains the same—that regulations result in great difficulty, especially for small business men and women throughout the land.

The argument that I made then, and which I make no excuse for making again, was that those small business men and women are the ones who are least able to speak for themselves. They are the ones on which we dump so much paperwork and regulation that we smother them. The medium-to-large businesses can cope with all that; they simply get another person along to deal with it. They can survive that extra imposition; they have a bit of slack in their cash reserves.

However, the small business men and women do not have those resources. They are the ones to whom we must look to provide the future employment for so many people

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

who are unemployed throughout the land. We must be extra-specially careful, therefore, not to allow regulations to have that effect on them.

Taking full regard of that, we introduced the new clauses simply to give those small business men and women the right to appeal to a magistrates court against such an unfair imposition. We thought it a reasonable device, and we presented it as such. It would have given the Bill the second leg that was necessary. The first leg was to strip away excess regulation, and the second leg would have been to guard against unfair imposition of regulation.

We were given certain assurances by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who was at that time speaking for the Government, when summing up on Report. He said:

"I wish to try especially to provide an appeals mechanism that is quick, effective and cost-effective and will not create a new bureaucracy".

He went on to say:

"If my hon. Friend withdraws his clause and the matter goes to another place, the basis of the debate there will consequently be more informed. I fully support what my hon. Friend wants to achieve".—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1994; Vol. 244, c. 69 and 70.]

Being the very decent man that he is, my hon. Friend did just that, and we therefore complied and withdrew the new clause, on the basis that the Bill would be improved by the addition of such a clause during its passage through the other place.

I therefore draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to the problem that appears to exist at the moment in introducing the new clause.

True to his word, my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton passed the matter to the deregulation task force, headed by Francis Maude—who was a colleague and who, I hope, will return to this place as a colleague—to consider the possibilities. The task force has considered it, and it appears it has handed the matter over to an official, to go away and put together a mechanism that could be properly implemented.

I understand that the official is now complaining that, first, there may not be enough time to put that mechanism into the Bill, and secondly, that there are some worries about the judicial approach. I also understand that the deregulation task force has essentially decided that the only way to solve the problem is to take the course that we proposed—the judicial route. It is simple and effective, and does not require extra bureaucracy.

I do not pretend to try to re-argue the case. All I am trying to do is to say to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that, in all good faith, men and women throughout the land had looked to us to find some form of redress.

We presented the Government with an opportunity. The Government, decently, said that they would consider it. I am worried that, if officials are allowed to say that it may be too difficult, we might not eventually include that mechanism in the Bill. If we do not, it will be a great failing for us here in the House, because we shall have failed the very people that we were sent here to support—the job creators, the people who will do the great job we want in providing new employment.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, please, please, would he speak to everyone who is concerned with that matter, and give them a sense of urgency? If we do nothing else but put that into the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, we shall represent that vast group of people out there, the ones who cannot speak for themselves, the small business men and women. They will thank us, and rightly. It will be the right thing to do. I urge my right hon. Friend to do just that.

5.44 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I suggest that the House should not adjourn before we have had further opportunity to discuss the gathering crisis that hangs over the pensions of many people who depend on personal pensions. I should declare an interest in that subject, as a small part of my research assistant's salary is funded by the National Union of Insurance Workers.

As the *Financial Times* commented in an article on 15 July,

"It has not been a good year for personal pensions".

That is an understatement. In the past year, there has been a series of damaging revelations about the personal pensions industry. It has become obvious that up to 500,000 people may have been wrongly advised to opt out of occupational pension schemes, and that more than 2 million people may have been wrongly advised to opt out of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

The pensions industry companies have had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the Personal Investments Authority, whose birth this week has, to say the least, been surrounded by almost complete scepticism. Merely a brief examination of the Order Paper of the past few days will show that there are no fewer than three early-day motions, tabled by Members on both sides of the House, highlighting failures in the regulatory system. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) referred to one of them earlier.

A succession of firms with household names, such as Norwich Union, Legal and General, Nationwide and now Barclays, have either had to suspend their sales staff for retraining or have been fined by regulators for the blatant mismanagement of sales practices.

It is therefore not surprising that, in the first quarter of this year, there was a dramatic drop in the sale of personal pensions—a fall of nearly 160,000 compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

The rows about bad management of the industry and ineffective regulation can obscure an even more fundamental problem. There are, in my view, sound reasons for most people to plan their pensions as a combination of state and non-state provision. The reality today is that many—probably most—working people who are outside secure occupational pension schemes will not be making sufficient provision to ensure that they receive a pension that they or anyone else will regard as adequate when they retire.

State pensions, including the SERPS element, will be too low for most of those people who depend entirely on them. Half the people who opted out of SERPS for appropriate personal pensions have an income so small that they would almost certainly have been better off in SERPS, and of all those with an appropriate personal pension, 60 per cent. are only putting in their national insurance rebate and are not making any additional contribution from their income.

Not only are many people with personal pensions underprovided; they often do not persist with the policy. As long ago as 1991, the Securities and Investments Board

revealed that a third of personal pensions are terminated or paid up within two years. At that time, the Consumers Association calculated that losses to investors through front-loaded commission charges and early penalty surrenders were running at £250 million a year—the equivalent of an annual Maxwell scandal. That was as long ago as 1991.

I recently completed a survey of 44 of the top pensions companies, asking about their lapse rates and termination rates. Of those 44 companies, only 13 were prepared to provide any information about the early cancellation of their policies, and all those that did so emphasised that there is still no industry-wide standard for providing that information. Of the 13 who were prepared to speak about the lapses in their policies, almost all said that one in five of their policies lapsed in some manner after two years. For most, between 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. of all the personal pensions that they sold lapsed in the first five years.

That highlights several serious problems. First, the difficulty of getting hold of that information from most companies means that one of the most useful indicators of the quality of the pension policy and the quality of the advice given by the insurance company is not available to the consumer.

A second problem is highlighted. We keep hearing Government statistics that 5 million people have personal pension policies, which implies that those policies will be kept until they mature and the policyholders will be able to retire on their proceeds. But it is clear that only a minority of those who buy personal pension policies see them through to full term. Many people with personal pension policies will keep them for only a short time, will lose a great deal of money on them and, ultimately, will not have adequate pensions.

There are, sadly, few signs that the Government have even begun to grasp the scale and scope of the problem. Attempts have been made, very belatedly, to tighten up the regulatory structure, with the formation of the Personal Investment Authority, but I believe that that authority will turn out to be only a staging post on the route to a more satisfactory system of statutory regulation. My concern is that regulation of the industry, however it is conducted, is still approached purely as an attempt to control the way in which products are sold. The regulation does not cover the quality of those products.

It is clear that many people who buy personal pensions buy policies that, for one reason or another, they cannot continue to full term, so they lose much of the money that they had hoped to put aside for their pension. Our regulation needs to focus far more on the quality of the products sold, establishing minimum standards of quality to protect those people who will depend on them for their pensions.

I raise my concerns about the personal pensions industry not because I seek to rubbish the industry, but because I recognise that there will be, for the foreseeable future, a category of people who cannot obtain occupational pensions and who would be ill advised to rely purely on state pensions. An essential element of future pensions policy must be to ensure that the personal pensions industry is run correctly.

There are several spheres in which the Government have not shown sufficient energy or action. They must assume responsibility for ensuring that people are properly covered by future pension provision. The Government have wasted the best part of £10 billion on encouraging people to opt out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Many of those people will be no better off, and some will be worse off, as a result of opting out. Many of them will be entitled to opt back into SERPS, so the £10 billion will have produced little benefit to anyone.

The Government have not yet highlighted to individuals how much money they should be putting aside towards some form of non-state pension if they want to achieve a certain level of retirement income. The time has come for the Government to take responsibility for giving an indication of those figures, which would have two benefits.

First, it would raise awareness of the cost of pension planning and shatter the complacent view held by too many people that simply having a personal pension must mean that it will generate sufficient retirement income for them. Secondly, highlighting the cost of private provision would encourage a better and more reasonable debate about the balance to be struck between tax-funded state pensions and non-state provision funded from people's incomes.

In addition, the Government should regularly conduct a national representative survey of the pension provision that individuals have made for themselves and, from that, project the level of pensions that people will receive. That is not done at present, but it would give us a much clearer idea of what those people's pensions will be in 20 or 30 years time, and could provide the basis of future policy development.

The role of regulation should be broadened so that we not only regulate how policies are sold, but ensure that the quality of policies is consistently pushed upwards.

5.54 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): It will be no surprise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hear that I intend to raise yet again the subject of the channel tunnel rail link. First, and significantly on this day, I should like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) who had the political courage and intellectual strength to reject Union Railways' proposal for a tunnel under Pepper Hill at Northfleet in my constituency. Thanks to the public campaign run by the residents of Northfleet and the conclusions of a geological survey on noise and vibration, a strong case was developed, which I took to my right hon. Friend who was then Secretary of State for Transport, and to which he gave careful consideration.

It would have been in the personal interest of my right hon. Friend to take a strong, firm decision at that stage to announce the route of the channel tunnel rail link from London St. Pancras to the channel tunnel at Cheriton. He could have taken a firm decision and told my constituents at Northfleet to lump it, but he did not. He understood the intellectual case put to him and told Union Railways to go back to the drawing board. That has resulted in an improved route, which skirts Pepper Hill, and I believe that that new route will be one of my right hon. Friend's lasting mementos. I also pay tribute to the hard work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), who was Minister of State throughout the saga.

A number of problems remain. I want to highlight the site of special scientific interest at Ashenbank wood and Cobham park—the latter is part of our national heritage and was laid out by Repton. I recently convened a meeting at Cobham hall of local councils and environmental

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

organisations at which we considered environmental mitigation. We have now been advised that Union Railways has redesigned the route at that point to a level 4 m lower and has agreed to our request to carry out a geological survey, which we believe will prove that United Railways' plans in that terrain of loose gravel and combustible lignite would not be wise.

Gravesham borough council will, at our request, provide professional consultants to assess the situation. I should like the tunnel to be designed through the chalk beneath because that would overcome the engineering problems caused by the geology as well as the environmental desecration that would be caused by the current proposal. The cost of that environmental improvement and other lesser improvements should be assessed.

I pay tribute to our previous Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Ben Patterson, who, over 15 years, was an excellent member of the European Parliament. Until the European elections, he led an effective campaign to harness significant grants under the environmental programmes of the European Commission. I expect his Labour successor as Member of the European Parliament to see that campaign through. I have written to that gentleman, Mr. Skinner, and to date he has been conspicuous by his silence. He has not even had the courtesy to acknowledge my letter, let alone do anything about the problem.

Another problem is the fact that the safeguarding is drawn far too tightly. The boundary of the safeguarding zone at Gravesend skirts five properties—four at Longview, in Henhurst road, Cobham and the Lodge at Scalers hill. That is unfair as it leaves the houses, which are sandwiched between the A2 motorway and the proposed channel tunnel rail link route, in a position that will become progressively more unbearable. The properties should be included in the safeguarding zone now. In the interim, I thank Union Railways because, following my strong representations, it has agreed to buy out two of the properties at Longview on compassionate and health grounds. I wonder why it will not put the whole matter in order by including all five properties.

I should like there to be a noise assessment of the channel tunnel rail link crossing at the Wrotham road, A227, and its effect on the village of Istead Rise and the houses at the tollgate. If we are to have such a major project we must ensure that we make the right decision now.

We still await an announcement adopting Ebbsfleet as the intermediate international station. That is an obvious location because it would serve well travellers resident in south-east London, Kent, Essex, Surrey and Sussex. Were the proposal for Ebbsfleet international to go ahead, it would mean thousands of new jobs for Gravesham and new roads for Northfleet. Northfleet town would effectively be bypassed and it would give my constituents better house values. Until now, the channel tunnel rail link has marked down house prices in that area of Northfleet. I believe that the announcement of an international station at Ebbsfleet would mark them up.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): My hon. Friend referred to Pepper Hill. Like him, I hope for an early announcement of an international station on the Ebbsfleet site. I am sure that my hon. Friend shares my concern that the construction of the rail link and the infrastructure connected with the Ebbsfleet station will cause immense problems for the local roads infrastructure, not least disruption to the A2, with the consequent movement of cars on to the lanes of Southfleet at Longfield, New Barn and Betsham. Will my hon. Friend join me in pressing the Department of Transport for a proper plan and timetable for infrastructure improvements?

Mr. Arnold: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. If we are successful in getting the international station for the Ebbsfleet valley between our two constituencies, there will be further challenges—for example, the work sites and how construction will be carried out with minimum disruption. There will also be the challenges of ensuring that we protect the environment at the Ebbsfleet water course, that archaeological studies of the Roman remains are carried out in advance and that the sports facilities at the proposed location for the station are fully replaced to serve the public in that area.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), I want briefly to comment on local government reforms. We must not lose sight of the fact that the objective of the reforms is local delivery of services, subject to local decision taking and at the best manageable cost. Against that criterion, I believe that Kent county council is inevitably found wanting, stretching as it does from the London boundaries to Thanet and Dover and southwards into the Weald. It is far too remote.

To the credit of the council's previous Conservative administration, it recognised the problem and set up local area offices. In my area of north-west Kent it set up an administrative office at Gravesend. Nevertheless, decision taking at Maidstone remains far too remote. The present Liberal and Labour-controlled council has taken some very insensitive decisions and there has been much neglect.

There are some dreadful examples of that. The council is currently bulldozing through the Wainscott bypass in the face of opposition from the people of Higham. It is neglecting the people of Old Denton by the failure to build the east Gravesend access road, which would take lorries out of Old Denton and provide good access to Comma Oil, the Norfolk road industrial estate and Denton wharf. It is neglecting the people of Northfleet by not building the fourth phase of the Thameside industrial route, which would effectively provide a Northfleet bypass.

The council has opposed every application for grant-maintained status for schools in the face of votes in favour as high as 90 per cent. among the local parents. Therefore, I welcome the decision announced yesterday by the Secretary of State for Education to approve the application by St. Joseph's Roman Catholic school at Northfleet.

I should like there to be a unitary council for north-west Kent, based on Gravesend and covering the existing area of the education and social services and also of the health district. That would achieve real local government, a unitary council with no confusion of responsibilities, minimum transitional disruption for the principal local government services—education and social services—and, at last, local decision making on our side of the north downs.

Some self-seeking local councillors concerned with their own personal bailiwicks have suggested that a north-west Kent unitary council would drag us into London and cover our green belt with concrete. That

self-interested scaremongering is absolutely shameless. Those claims could not be further from the truth. Kent is an historic county. We have our traditions—our Lord Lieutenant, our High Sheriff, our cricket team and our 101 voluntary organisations. There is no proposal from anyone to extend the county of Greater London. Indeed, Kent-wide co-operation can be achieved by a revitalised Kent association of district councils.

The metropolitan green belt is safeguarded by law, by planning decisions and even by the east Thames corridor study. In Gravesham it is well and truly laid out and safeguarded south of the A2, to the east of Riverview park and Chalk and to the south of the former. We shall be robust. Gravesham borough council is robust, and a north-west Kent unitary council would be likewise.

I oppose the favoured proposal of the Local Government Commission for two unitary councils, North-West Kent and Medway Towns, with the remainder of the county based on two-tier administration. That option of the Local Government Commission is a half-measure and a soggy compromise. We should have a proud county of Kent served by six unitary councils, co-operating in a revitalised Kent association of district councils. I hope that my constituents will join me in pressing for the Local Government Commission's third option.

6.5 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): It would be inappropriate for the House to adjourn before it has had the chance to consider the need to reduce road traffic, especially in view of the recent report on the increase in cases of asthma and the likely link between that and air pollution.

That issue has concentrated people's minds on road traffic. Indeed, it has been suggested that asthma levels among children have doubled over the past 10 years—the same period over which there has been a doubling in the number of private and light goods vehicles on the road. That cannot be entirely coincidental.

It is clear that the advantages in personal mobility and convenience of increased road traffic are being vastly outweighed by the negative effects. Indeed, the advantages are already cancelled out by congestion. If current predictions of a 35 per cent. increase in road traffic by the year 2000 and a doubling by the year 2020 are fulfilled, road traffic will be a monster running out of control. That monster must be tamed.

Asthma is only one of the health effects of the constant increase in road traffic. A Lancaster university report estimates that up to 15 million people in Britain could be suffering from health problems as a result of road traffic near their homes. That is a figure that we do not remember often enough. At the same time, there are almost 4,000 deaths each year on our roads and 40,000 throughout the European Union. Those are horrific figures. There is no conceivable ethical justification for allowing such carnage. The financial cost of road accidents is estimated at £8 billion annually—a huge sum.

The environmental effects of increasing road traffic are already very serious and they are set to become disastrous. We know about the loss of open countryside, the loss of habitats and therefore the biodiversity that constitutes a great part of the wealth of our planet.

Road traffic is an increasingly significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. By the year 2000, road traffic will be emitting 23 per cent. of the United Kingdom's carbon dioxide, very effectively undermining the Government's commitment to stabilise at 1990 levels by the year 2000. That commitment is a hopelessly and, in my view, grotesquely inadequate response to the immense threat posed by global warming and the need recognised internationally to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60 per cent. in the near future.

Road traffic is also a profligate consumer of resources. It takes up 80 per cent. of the energy used in transport, which in turn is responsible for 33 per cent. of all energy consumption in the United Kingdom. Together with domestic energy, the total comes to more than 50 per cent. It imposes massive costs in terms of road building and insufficiently recognised costs in terms of the quality of community life.

There are costs too in terms of social inequality. After all, 35 per cent. of all households do not have access to a car and 53 per cent. of women do not have a driving licence. Those categories of people are disadvantaged by the inadequate provision of public transport which is exacerbated in turn by the fact that other people who have access to a car over-use it.

Something needs to be done, but what? Technology can play its part in reducing some of the environmental damage, but that reduction is bound to be limited. There is no bucking the need to reduce the use of the car and other forms of road transport.

How can that be done? It is clear that we need a United Kingdom-wide strategy with targets set by the relevant Secretaries of State. Stabilisation by 2000 at 1990 levels would be both modest and achievable, although many would say that that was an inadequate target, with a 5 per cent. reduction by 2005 and a 10 per cent. reduction by 2010.

The principle of target setting is supported by the CBI and increasingly supported even by people who have in the past been associated with the road lobby. According to a recent survey in the *Observer*, Michael Roberts, the CBI's transport policy adviser, said:

"Traffic growth produces congestion which produces further roads which produces more growth and more congestion. It is a vicious circle that must be broken."

Achieving such targets would involve a major cultural change. That needs to be understood. It would have far-reaching implications for economic policy in an economy which is so strongly dependent on growth in car production, and so on. But it is the kind of change that would bring Government policy and economic policy more into line with the Rio idea of sustainable development. I am glad to see that the Labour party's environment policy published today begins to address the need for a change of direction.

Such a cultural change can be brought about only through widespread public involvement and community debate. Cultural change must involve collaboration and debate between people in the communities. That process should be led by our local authorities. They are or will soon be drawing up their local Agenda 21s, part of the Rio process. They will be considering how to move towards sustainable development at a local level.

Transport policy and reduction in road traffic should be integral to the process of drawing up local Agenda 21s. It should be a statutory requirement for local authorities to show how they propose to meet the specific traffic reduction targets in their areas.

[Mr. Cynog Dafis]

There is no shortage of ideas about how that can be done. Certain German cities, such as Frieburg and Bextehude, have managed significantly to reduce car use and the accompanying pollution which car ownership has increased. Greater ownership reduced use.

Local authorities and the Government would benefit from study of the excellent document of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, "Wales needs transport not traffic", which sets out a broad range of policy proposals from revamping existing cost-benefit analysis assumptions to provisions such as encouraging cycling and improved integrated timetabling of public transport. A great deal can be done at local level in a practical way.

Everything is to be gained from an active debate at local level on the need for change in transport policy, but the Government must give a lead. That is why I presented recently to Parliament the Road Traffic Reduction Bill, prepared and supported by the Green party, Friends of the Earth and Plaid Cymru. It is a subject to which I shall be returning during the recess and after when I return to traffic-jammed London in the autumn. I hope to find wide support for the Bill from all corners of the House. That support can currently be registered by signing early-day motion 1520.

I am confident that this is an idea whose time has come. It is a theme that needs addressing now. I am confident that there will be widespread support for it throughout society. I hope that we shall have a positive response from the Government. I hope that we shall not find the same lack of vision and obsession with short-term considerations that we saw with the Energy Conservation Bill which was destroyed by exactly the same process as was described earlier by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) in relation to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. We need a more progressive and illuminated approach than that.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, I suspect, all other hon. Members, I am looking forward to the recess, not least because it gives us the chance to have a holiday and the opportunity to pursue other things, whether within our constituencies or in other areas of special interest that are more difficult for those of us with constituencies a long way from London to pursue when the House is sitting.

However, another reason why I am looking forward to the recess is that I believe that during the next three months there will be yet more economic good news. We shall see low inflation maintained, continuation of the steady economic growth that we are now enjoying, and the further shrinkage of the dole queues, with unemployment falling. All that, I hasten to suggest, particularly if the good weather that we are enjoying at the moment continues, will lead to a continuing improvement in the Government's fortunes.

But that is not what I wanted to say to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. That is just a little warm-up for something that will not be quite so welcome in certain sections of the Government. I want to refer to my growing concern about the funding of education in North Yorkshire.

The most important of all changes in our Government that have been announced so far today is the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) as Secretary of State for Education. I cannot think of anyone better qualified to do the job. She was an education officer for many years in Norfolk and then was the local education authority chairman. I am sure that she will bring into play her vast experience of funding schools in a rural area such as Norfolk, which is not that different from north Yorkshire.

The needs of education funding in our shire counties are not being given the importance that they deserve. Only last week, the Select Committee on Education published its report on the disparity in funding between primary and secondary schools. Much of what I read in that report seemed to coincide with and reflect the growing concerns expressed to me by head teachers, particularly in the primary sector, during the past three or four years.

One reason why education funding in large rural counties such as North Yorkshire is a problem is that the standard spending assessment does not reflect the needs of sparsity. In a nutshell, the problem is that we have to fund a large number of small primary schools in rural areas. It is all very well to suggest that a number of those schools should close, but some are several miles away from each other and it would cost a great deal of money to carry on with the policy that we began a few years ago of closing three or four small schools and opening one new one. That policy has been successful where it could be carried out, but while small rural schools exist—they are extremely popular with parents and local communities—they are a significant drain on the education budget, with the result that the funding of some of the larger primary and junior schools is significantly less than it is in inner-city areas.

The consequence is there for all to see. The primary school in the village in which I live, for example, has 395 pupils on roll. Interestingly, that was the number in 1988 when the school had a complement of 16 teachers. This year, the number is down to 13.6 and is likely to fall further. At the same time, the school has accumulated a £21,000 deficit through local management of schools. The LMS formula in North Yorkshire is partially to blame, and that is recognised by both the department of further education and the local education authority—there are moves afoot to redress the balance.

Four factors fall more within the Government's purview than that of the LEA, and I will target three of them. Under LMS, funding is given for average rather than actual salaries. That creates a serious problem in North Yorkshire, where many schools still have the same teachers in post as when LMS started—and they have higher than average salaries. Secondly, year after year we continue to lose out from area cost adjustment. I see no virtue in persisting with that scheme, which is supposed to reflect the higher cost of schools in London and the home counties, and a large percentage of expenditure goes on salaries—and they are fixed nationally. That only piles one agony on another.

Another problem is the growing population and increasing school rolls. Those pupils are growing older, yet no extra money is given. The extra cost must be met from the budget increase, which was only 1.8 per cent. last year for the whole county. I do not underestimate the difficulties of dealing with such problems at a time of financial stringency. They are not easily resolved. One could say much more about the funding of North Yorkshire county council, and we will be making representations to

Ministers at the Department of the Environment. That has a knock-on effect on education funding, given that the standard spending assessment is the starting point.

Schools will reopen before the House returns from the long summer recess, and I dare say that many hon. Members will have the opportunity to visit schools and to talk to head teachers. I hope that my remarks will help to inform Ministers when they come to consider how to resolve the problems that I mentioned. Some decisions will be taken soon after the House returns, so I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will convey my concerns to Ministers in the relevant Departments so that greater fairness may be established for schools in shire counties throughout our land.

6.23 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Four issues will not wait until October. The first is the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority report. On 12 April, in a debate on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, I interrupted the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) to ask this question:

"Has the hon. Lady had any discussions with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority? Some people believe that research would be affected. Is the hon. Lady absolutely sure that it would not?"

She replied:

"Absolutely sure. I have had discussions with the authority. It knows what my intention is, and why."

I have a different version of events from members of that authority, but I will let that pass for reasons of time. The hon. Lady continued:

"I want to send a message out to scientists that there is no point in spending any more time on research in that area, or in messing about with aborted mouse eggs, rat eggs or anything similar. The end product from using aborted human eggs for fertilisation purposes will simply not be allowed to be used. There are occasions when the House must assert its authority and make it clear that scientists sometimes go too far."—[*Official Report*, 12 April 1994; Vol. 241, c. 158.]

I was shocked by that, but nothing like as shocked as when I heard the Secretary of State for Health assent to all that drivel.

After consulting the British Medical Association, I ask whether, in the light of the HFEA's recent conclusion that the use of foetal ovarian tissue in research is acceptable, the Government will give the reassurance that the hon. Lady's amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill regarding the use of foetal ovarian tissue in fertility treatment will not in any way restrict valuable research in the causes and avoidance of infertility, birth defects, miscarriage and related areas. I am familiar with the distinguished research conducted at Edinburgh, and that matter is urgent.

Secondly, I have repeatedly raised the issue of the Lockerbie disaster and Pan Am 103. A letter to me from the Lord Advocate dated 8 July states:

"The investigation remains open and we will, of course, look into anything relevant to the case; we cannot comment on particular investigative steps which may be taken."

I have thought for a long time that the Crown Office does not have the evidence that it claims. Nevertheless, I take at face value its desire to have a trial.

On 26 March, the Arab League backed a Libyan proposal to send to trial in the International Court of Justice, with Scottish judges and under Scottish law, the two Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie boming. The Arab League's resolution urged the UN Security Council to take into consideration

"this serious and new proposal in the search for a peaceful solution to prevent any escalation that could increase the tension in the region".

There are 5,000 British nationals in that area, which is also valuable to British industry. For reasons of right and wrong and to try to bring an end to that deeply unsatisfactory situation, I plead with the Government once again to think of holding a trial under Scottish rules in the Hague.

The third issue is Iraq. I quote from Riad El Taher of Friendship Across Frontiers, with whom I went to Baghdad and to the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates last year. He has learned from independent travellers that the health situation there is diabolical due primarily to extra shortages of medicine and the desperate situation concerning water pumps and filters. The Leader of the House will know that I saw the Prime Minister about that matter. In the sweltering heat of this summer, I told him that there is a humanitarian aspect that ought to be resolved.

Finally, there are urgent questions for the Government in respect of cross-media ownership. Can *The Times* at 20p seriously be expected to make money without at first killing off at least one other broadsheet newspaper? If the answer is no, is not Mr. Murdoch's policy of *The Times* at 20p a clear case of predatory pricing? If so, why is it allowed? My question No. 9 to the President of the Board of Trade this afternoon was not fully answered.

Are the Government aware of the alleged view of Rupert Murdoch, expressed to David English, that Britain is over-papered by national newspapers, and that Mr. Murdoch foresees a situation in which we have only *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* as national newspapers?

Are Ministers bothered about the extent of foreign ownership of the British press—*The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent* and, perhaps soon, the *Daily Mirror* and other papers?

Mr. Murdoch is, in effect, giving *The Times* away. Of 20p, 17½p goes to the wholesalers and retailers who distribute and sell the paper. The 2½p that comes back to News International does not even begin to cover the cost of printing the paper—about 15p a copy. That is a £30 million a year subsidy.

Is Mr. Murdoch determined to use his virtually unlimited resources to rearrange the market to suit his own convenience? He is a cynic about human nature, believing that price will always overwhelm values, particularly the civilised values that he despises.

Parliament can do something about this matter. If we have the collective will, we can do something about cross-media ownership and follow the American example, where many states ask owners to choose between making money from television stations and their ownership of the press. That is a clear choice that can be made, and was indeed made in the case of Roy Thomson and the Scottish newspapers that he owned. He was made to give up STV.

The issue is the quality of democracy. I believe that Mr. Murdoch must be made to choose between his newspapers, the television station and BSkyB. Indeed, there is a strong argument, such is the ownership from abroad, for limiting ownership of the British press to Europeans. That is a truncated view, to which we will return tonight on the Consolidated Fund.

6.31 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House adjourns for the summer recess, I wish to raise two brief points. The first is a local matter and the second is

[Mr. David Amess]

international. There was a time when I felt that the whole of the United Kingdom wished to visit my constituency of Basildon—I really mean journalists and politicians. Judging from the results of the local government boundary review, it seems that, at the moment, Basildon is somewhat unloved. My district council very much supports unitary status. We wanted either to be a unitary authority on our own or part of a large unitary authority.

The result of the Local Government Commission review is that my constituents are given three options: option one is Basildon with Thurrock, while option two is Basildon with Thurrock, as is option three. That does not seem a great choice for my constituents. The chief executive of Thurrock council has said:

"Thurrock's population is distinct from that of the rest of Essex. They shop locally and socialise locally. The strongest social, cultural and economic ties are with London."

I have nothing other than good will—as have my constituents—to direct to the residents of Thurrock, but as I have already described, Thurrock wants very much to be a London borough. As ever, the Labour party's position on the matter is quite extraordinary. The socialist leader of the Labour group on Basildon council, who was my Labour opponent in the general election, gave public evidence about the redistribution of the constituencies. On that occasion, the Boundary Commission wished to destroy my constituency and put part of it with Thurrock, and my Labour opponent said that we had nothing in common with residents of Thurrock and argued that Basildon should be kept in its entirety. When it came to the local government review, however, he argued that we had a great deal in common with the local residents of Thurrock.

I feel that my constituents have been hard done by in the commission's review. I very much hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, when he considers those matters with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, will look at Basildon's case for a unitary authority on its own.

My final point concerns Kuwait. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) for all that she has done in trying to bring to the attention of the House the Kuwati prisoners of war. All hon. Members—bar, I think, about 56—supported the war to liberate Kuwait. At the end of the war, I felt that there was an unfinished matter—the fact that Saddam Hussein was still ruling Iraq in a most evil manner. The 625 prisoners of war seem to have been completely forgotten. The Iraqis also detained foreigners from nine nations that were sympathetic to the Kuwaiti cause.

It is very hard for us to understand the scale and anguish that the Kuwaiti people feel about their missing prisoners of war. Late at night, young people of 14 were rounded up out of their beds and taken away. I very much hope that Her Majesty's Government will resist the call to lift sanctions on Saddam Hussein. We should insist also that United Nations inspectors of biological and chemical weapons establishments should be permitted, with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to visit the prisoners of war in their gaols. It is an absolute disgrace that, for whatever reason, we seem to have forgotten them. I hope that the British Government and hon. Members on both sides of the House will keep up the pressure to achieve the freedom of those people.

6.36 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I think that the whole House will have much sympathy with what the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has said. As always with these brief debates, in the three hours available to us, we seem to be able to cram a quart into a parliamentary pint pot.

At the beginning of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) congratulated the Leader of the House on surviving what he described as the slaughter—a reference to today's Cabinet reshuffle. I am sure that the whole House is pleased to see that the Leader of the House is still with us. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."] He has a place in the affections of Opposition Members. I do not know whether the reshuffle could be described as a slaughter. It certainly was not a slaughter of the innocents.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, as he did in a previous Adjournment debate, made a determined case for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. He has the support of many Opposition Members for what he had to say. Similarly, his reference to what is now the pretty vexed issue of ministerial responsibility for veterans affairs commands much support from Opposition Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) spoke of the affairs of Surrey county cricket club and its perfectly reasonable desire to own the freehold of its premises. I suggest that she sponsor a Bill to vest the freehold. The local authority could then make a gift of it to the Surrey county cricket club. After all, if urban development corporations, set up by the Government, are allowed to vest the land of local authorities then hand it over to private sector business interests, surely in such a good cause it is open to us to consider proceeding in the same way.

My hon. Friend also had something to say about the relationship between publicans and their brewers. As I know a bit more about that, I feel that I am on safer territory there than I am when talking about cricket. There is widespread support for what she said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke about the plight of Cyprus, which has been divided now for 20 years, and the attitude of the British Government. It is a feature of these Adjournment debates that my hon. Friend raises an important foreign affairs topic. He has campaigned vigorously on behalf of Cyprus, and, indeed, has a strong constituency interest in the matter. I congratulate him on his speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) drew our attention to the important issue of breast cancer, and the need for a national action plan. As she pointed out, one woman in 12 may be affected by the disease.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—seeking, I suspect, to show support for the Prime Minister's views, which is unusual for him—made some comments which I hope that the Leader of the House will find helpful and convey to the Prime Minister, who will no doubt receive them ecstatically. If the views of the rejected President of the European Commission are shared by the accepted President, surely Members of the European Parliament should consider carefully whether our Prime Minister would approve of the appointment of such a person.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North also referred to inequalities in the treatment of those who work for a wage and the position of top managers who are able to set their own wages and conditions—including, all too often nowadays, very generous share option schemes. This is not the first occasion on which the House has considered an issue that is clearly very divisive, not just in the House but in society as a whole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) spoke of personal pensions and in particular the inadequacy of provision, especially for those who opted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme, without, I suspect, fully appreciating the consequences. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) drew our attention to four separate topics—the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the importance of protecting those engaged in legitimate research; the Lockerbie tragedy, and his continued campaign for a trial to be held according to Scottish rules; Iraq; and the newspaper price war. I note that that last subject will be debated again later tonight.

Let me mention two other matters. First, as right hon. and hon. Members will know, the Leader of the House and I are engaged in discussions aimed at securing a package arising from the Jopling report. I am not yet in a position to state formally the views of the parliamentary Labour party, but I can say that discussions are proceeding well and have been very thorough. I hope that we can soon put proposals to the House that may well apply in the next Session, and I know that my view is shared by the Leader of the House.

I wish to thank the right hon. Gentleman personally for the courteous and constructive manner in which the negotiations have been conducted. There has been a genuine willingness to make progress, on the basis that the balance of advantage between Government and Opposition should not be disturbed: the arrangements that we make should be for the convenience of the House, and no attempt should be made to score party points.

Finally, let me make a plea for Swan Hunter. It has become almost traditional—in what has been a sad and difficult year for Tyneside, for my constituents and for those in the neighbouring constituencies of Wallsend and Jarrow who work in the shipbuilding yard—for me to make such a plea, and to ask the Government to give Swan Hunter an order so that it can survive. As the House will know, yesterday the vital procurement order relating to the Sir Bedivere, which could have secured a private sector solution to Swan Hunter's problems, was placed with Rosyth. That decision almost certainly means the closure of Swan Hunter and the end of shipbuilding on the Tyne.

Let me give the House an idea of the scale of the problem on Tyneside. Before the receivers came in, Swan Hunter's wages bill was just over £1 million a week. That went into a pretty concentrated economy in the communities represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and myself. We stand to lose all that.

Although most of the domestic industry had ganged up against us—for reasons that may have seemed commercially sound to those involved—we had managed to secure a foreign shipyard, Constructions Mecaniques de Normandie, which was interested in taking our yard over, to compete for work not just in the British procurement programme but in the middle east. It believed that the work could be done on Tyneside. If the bid had been allowed to proceed, we could have added something to the British economy, foreign investment and overseas work; we would not be taking work from others. That strikes me as particularly unfair.

Our community has been hit by heavy engineering redundancies at NEI Parsons, by pit closures in County Durham and Northumberland and by the complete closure of the shipbuilding and ship repair industry in neighbouring Sunderland. If the blow delivered yesterday is fatal, as it almost certainly will be, I do not think that we shall be able to sustain it. I am sure that the Lord President is not unsympathetic; he realises how desperate is the plight of Tyneside people. Will he arrange for a representative of the Department of Trade and Industry, or perhaps the Prime Minister himself, to announce an aid package for Tyneside—an economic development package—to ameliorate the dreadful circumstances in which we now find ourselves? I hope that that can be done before the House rises for the recess.

6.46 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I thank the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) for his kind remarks about me personally; I also thank hon. Members for their warm response to those remarks. I am certainly pleased to be continuing in my present role, not least because of the exposure that it brings me, in debates such as this, to what might be described as the rich tapestry of House of Commons life—ranging from the impact of fragments on Jupiter to a number of other events rather closer to home.

I congratulate the House on the way in which it has conducted its business over the past three hours. I cannot recollect as many as 16 or 17 speeches being made in this debate before. That number will make it even more difficult for me to reply to all who have spoken as fully as I should like. Let me add, however, that in cases of which I can only take note I shall ensure later that points deserving further reply from my ministerial colleagues will be drawn to their attention.

I well understand why the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East mentioned Tyneside and Swan Hunter. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) would echo many of his views, and I will ensure that the points that he raised are drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and others who may be concerned with such matters. As the hon. Gentleman knows, five or six years ago I was for a year the Minister with responsibility for shipbuilding, and I had much to do with shipbuilding on Tyneside. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's reasons for raising the issue.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned our discussions on the Jopling report. As I have repeatedly emphasised, the eventual package must pay due regard to the interests of all involved. The need for such a balance makes the task complex, and it must necessarily proceed on the basis that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. A good deal of detailed work remains to be done, and—as the hon. Gentleman said—neither of us can become drawn further into the matter today; but I too can say without reservation that our discussions have been friendly, positive and constructive.

[Mr. Tony Newton]

We believe that we have made good progress in identifying a package that offers the prospect of achieving wider agreement on changes that could be made in the next Session, probably on a trial or experimental basis. I hope to work further towards that end during the recess and perhaps I might reciprocate the kindness of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East by saying that I hope that he will be able to continue to work with me in the positive and constructive way that we have achieved so far.

I hasten to make some comments as best I can on some of the speeches that have been made. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) drew attention to the National Audit Office report on property owned by the Department of Transport. My right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department are seeking to ensure that the properties are let quickly, which would appear to be the best preventive measure. I am sure that they want to look carefully at the points that he made.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) predictably, but I would not say unreasonably, went over ground that has become fairly well trodden. I hope that he will understand if in the brief time available I do not add to what has been said about the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

The right hon. Gentleman also raised the issue of provision for ex-service people. During that debate, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) said:

"The debate is intended for hon. Members to bounce ideas off one another".—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1994; Vol. 245, c. 1078.]

That did not give quite the impression that the right hon. Gentleman sought to convey in his remarks. The Government's attitude was made clear by my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who was previously the Minister of State for Defence Procurement.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The resolution was approved by the House and is a decision of this place. That must be an important matter.

Mr. Newton: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, but my point about the spirit in which the hon. Member for Thurrock approached the debate and the point that he made does something to weaken the right hon. Gentleman's argument.

My hon. Friends the Members for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and a range of other hon. Members on both sides of the House made a number of points about the local government review, local government expenditure and so on. I have been given a briefing note which says that I should say that the Government are in a listening mode. I can tell hon. Members on both sides of the House that both I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are listening carefully to what they say.

I have a line that is barely more helpful for the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) who spoke about the freehold of the Oval. It says that it is not for the Government to intervene in a matter between Surrey county cricket club and the Duchy of Cornwall. I am cautious about going beyond that. I have been the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but that is somewhat different. I am sure that those at whom her remarks were directed will want to consider carefully what she has said and what is in the early-day motion. I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is interested in Surrey county cricket club, and some of the hon. Lady's remarks may have aroused his interest.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall and others raised the issue of pubs. I am advised that there are not seen to be grounds for the Government to take action against Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd., except possibly for abuse of the English or French language, because there is no evidence that the company has breached the beer orders or undertakings. Again, I am sure that the hon. Lady's remarks will be carefully studied, not least by those Ministers who will be relieved that presumably the purpose of her speech was to ensure that somebody did not need to be here at about 5 am to listen to the debate in which she had intended to raise that matter.

I congratulate the House generally on the ingenuity that has been shown. I calculate that about half the speeches that I have listened to in the past three hours have been a way of hon. Members avoiding the need to be here at extremely inconvenient hours during the night. I am sure that that purpose will be warmly endorsed by my right hon. and hon. Friends who might have had to be here.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) that those who brief me assiduously have failed to give me any up-to-date information on the situation on Jupiter. To be honest, they have not come up with anything useful on Classic FM either. One of my hon. Friend's questions was directed at me and concerned the content of the next legislative programme, which is a matter in which I have an interest. As my hon. Friend will know, part of the way in which that interest is expressed is in a traditional phrase saying that one cannot anticipate the next Queen's Speech. However, I note what my hon. Friend said.

I can tell the other hon. Members to whose contributions I shall not be able to respond that I shall genuinely look at what they have said, not least at what was said by those who raised health service issues, some of them going back to my time at the Department of Health. The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) may recall—if she does not, I intend to remind her—that I was the Minister who launched the breast cancer screening programme some eight years ago. It made us the first country in the European Community to launch such a programme. We are always concerned to find ways of building on that initiative and improving the way in which we deal with that problem.

I apologise to those hon. Members on whose speeches I have not been able to comment, not least the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who raised some powerful points. I invite the House—I hope to obtain its assent—to pass the motion on the Order Paper.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 74.

Division No. 301] **[6.56 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Aitken, Jonathan	Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Bates, Michael
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Bellingham, Henry
Amess, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Arbuthnot, James	Booth, Hartley
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bowis, John
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Brandreth, Gyles
Ashby, David	Brazier, Julian
Aspinwall, Jack	Bright, Graham
Atkins, Robert	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Browning, Mrs. Angela

Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gerrard, Neil
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Paul Flynn and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising to-morrow, do adjourn until Monday 17th October.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to draw to your attention something important that has happened today following the laying before the House some hours ago of the accounts of the Welsh Development Agency. They stated, without reference to the House, that all loans and grants from the WDA and the Development Board for Rural Wales to small and medium-sized firms have been suspended forthwith. I draw it to your attention, Madam Speaker, because on 7 July the Secretary of State for Wales made a statement on the legality of grants and loans from the DBRW and the WDA but did not mention the fact that they had been suspended. Without reference to the House, it has been decided that, for at least 10 months, small and medium-sized firms in Wales are to receive no grants or loans.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I can rule only on the procedure of the House, and on our Standing Orders. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) appears to have an argument with the Government, but it is not a matter for the Speaker of the House.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe that this is a point of order, although it arises from the same matter, because it relates to the fact that we are about to adjourn for the summer recess. The accounts were put in the Journal Office only today, and will not be available to hon. Members until tomorrow, by which time it will be too late to do anything about a matter of considerable importance, not only to rural

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

Wales—because of the development of rural initiative, venture and enterprise grants—but to those concerned with the industrial valleys grants. Companies will be left in limbo for three months or longer, so that is a matter of considerable concern. Through you, Madam Speaker, may I invite a Minister to come to the House tomorrow morning to address the issue?

Madam Speaker: If any Minister wishes to make a statement on the matter, and to give information to the House, the House will be here tomorrow morning and I shall be in the Chair to hear any such statement.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Local Government Elections

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5744/94, relating to local government elections; welcomes the principle expressed in that document that the laws of Member States should apply as far as possible; and endorses the main policy objectives of the Government as expressed in paragraph 22 of the Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Home Office on 22nd April 1994, in particular the Government's view expressed in paragraph 11 of the Memorandum that proposals for the attestation of non-national candidates at local government elections by their home Member State are unworkable in the United Kingdom, and the view expressed in paragraph 15 of the Memorandum that the provisions of the Directive should be reviewable.

Trans-European Transport Networks

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7073/94, relating to the development of trans-European transport networks; and endorses the Government's proposed approach to negotiations on the proposal in the Council.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Question agreed to.

Privileges

7.10 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That Mr. Attorney General, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Tony Benn, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Bill Michie, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. John Morris, Mr. Tony Newton, Sir Cranley Onslow, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Peter Shore, Sir James Spicer, and Mr. Alan Williams be members of the Committee of Privileges.

The original motion on the Order Paper has been amended because a new position has arisen. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), whom we had intended to nominate as a member of the Committee, is expected—I have to put it in those terms at the moment—to take up another appointment that would be incompatible with his membership of the Committee. I have therefore suggested to the House an amended motion containing the name of Dame Jill Knight, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am prepared and content to accept a motion moved in that form, with the name of Dame Jill Knight substituted for that of Mr. John Ward. I also inform the House at this stage that I have selected a manuscript amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), to leave out the name of Sir Marcus Fox.

Mr. Newton: I intend to speak only briefly to the motion, as I did on the original motion to establish the Committee—and for the same reasons. The nominations reflect established and accepted precedents in providing for the inclusion of myself as Leader of the House, the Attorney-General and the shadow Attorney-General, the chairman of the 1922 committee and the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, and 12 other senior Members from both sides of the House. Eight members of the Committee—slightly fewer than half—are Privy Councillors. I believe that that will be a Committee whose experience and judgment will command the respect of the House, and in which it can have confidence concerning the discharge of the responsibility that the House has laid on it.

7.12 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I shall be brief. My manuscript amendment calls upon the House to delete the name of the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox). I have attempted to give the hon. Gentleman notice of the amendment. I left a note for him on the Board some hours ago, and telephoned his office, but he was not there. [HON. MEMBERS: "He was probably at a board meeting."] However, as his name appears on the Order Paper the hon. Gentleman is not entitled to be surprised that the business is being dealt with this evening.

I have nothing personal against the hon. Member for Shipley. I do not question his integrity in any way. But with the best will in the world, I do not accept that someone so weighed down with directorships and consultancies can creditably serve on a Committee of that nature. I took the opportunity to look in the Register of Members' Interests and saw that the hon. Gentleman has quite a long list of remunerated directorships.

For example, there is Westminster Communications, whose clients include British Gas, the Builders Merchants Federation and Standard Life. There are also the Care Services Group, which is a contract cleaning services company; McCarthy and Stone Ltd., which deals in sheltered housing; the Bristol Port Company; the Illingworth Morris group, which is a wool textile group; Hartley Investment Trust, a group investment company; the Yorkshire Food Group, a food processing company; and Pubmaster Ltd., which owns public houses.

The hon. Gentleman has other remunerated employment, too. He is a consultant to 3M (UK) Ltd., a manufacturer of industrial, consumer, commercial and health care products; to Shepherd (Construction) Ltd., which is an industrial and commercial builder; and to Gratte Brothers Ltd., electrical engineers. Clearly the hon. Gentleman is an extremely busy man, quite apart from anything else. The question even arises whether he will have time to fit in service on the Committee between his other engagements.

However, that is not the point of my amendment. I believe that the Committee must not confine itself to the alleged foolishness of the two hon. Members whose actions caused it to be set up, but should address the wider issue—the fact that Members of Parliament are sent here to serve their constituents, not to enrich themselves. If the Committee failed to deal with that question, it would undermine not only its own credibility, not only Parliament's credibility, but the credibility of the democratic process.

Many of our constituents feel strongly about those issues, which reflect on all of us. So many people want to believe the worst of Parliament, and we all have an interest in ensuring that they believe the best. I am most anxious that people should not be able to allege that the Committee has been stitched up because it is too deeply in hock to vested interests to tackle properly the questions that it should address.

The hon. Member for Shipley is not by any stretch of the imagination the only Member who is weighed down with directorships and consultancies. It is cynical of the Government to stuff the Committee with Members who so obviously have an interest in ensuring that nothing will change. They have badly misread public opinion, and misread the mood in the House of Commons, too.

It is no part of my argument to say that there are no Tory Members fit to serve on the Committee. There are plenty of Tory Members of proven integrity who have no directorships or consultancies, and who share the Opposition's concern about the credibility of the democratic process. I should like to see some of those people on the Committee, and I am puzzled as to why the Government have chosen not to add any of them. They should take the names on the Order Paper away and come back with others.

My amendment asks the Government to delete only one name and to find just one Tory Member who is completely free of vested interests and can be relied upon to uphold the integrity of the House and to tackle the wider issues that the Committee should address.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way on the issue of removing one hon. Member from the Committee. He will be aware that I tabled an amendment, which was not selected, which requested that three hon. Members be removed and be replaced by three women. The Government have now tried to correct that serious error and they have put a woman on the Committee. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that it is absolutely

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

disgraceful that the Government simply see men in grey suits with lots of consultancies, and the rest of the human race is totally ignored.

Mr. Mullin: My hon. Friend makes an important point. As Chairman Mao said, women hold up half the sky. They should be properly represented on the Committee.

I repeat that I have nothing personal against the hon. Member for Shipley. I just want the Committee to command credibility not only with the House, but with the public. I want it to hold a proper inquiry which addresses an issue that has been a running sore for many of our constituents for many years. The fact that the situation has been allowed to continue for so many years does us no credit at all. I ask that the name of the hon. Member for Shipley be deleted from the list of Committee members.

7.20 pm

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): It may be appropriate for me to begin by declaring my own outside interests. I am on the advisory board of the Union Bank of Switzerland, I work for Bywater International and I work for British Gas and British Global Gas. There is one other confession that I should make to the House which is appropriate to this debate: on one occasion, I received £1,000 in the Palace of Westminster in circumstances that some of my constituents—I hope not many—might regard as reprehensible. I placed a wager with an Opposition Member on the result of the 1992 general election. He was unwise enough to bet on a Labour victory and I was able to pocket £1,000. I hope to show the House that this incident is relevant to the motion.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Opposition Members want complete openness; that is the whole point of the manuscript amendment. Surely, therefore, it is incumbent on my right hon. Friend to name the Opposition Member who handed over £1,000 to him.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall come to that point in a moment. I mention the incident because, although it is true that some of our constituents would condemn gambling in any shape or form, the fact is that most of our fellow citizens indulge in an occasional flutter. The House—this is the point that I wish to make in reference to the members of the Committee—would be vastly diminished if those of us who make up its membership did not reflect not only the hopes and ambitions of our constituents, but their whims and foibles. There is a footnote to the wager.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: When I have concluded this point, I shall give way to hon. Members who wish to intervene.

There is a footnote to the wager—and this answers the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). The Opposition Member concerned, who paid up promptly and honourably, asked me not to go public on the matter and that is why I do not propose to reveal his name. In fact I told a number of my close colleagues, including my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, on the very eve of the election and I have told a number of friends in the House about the incident since, always making it clear that it was not for public consumption. I am delighted to tell the House that it has never appeared in public print. I do not—

Mr. Salmond: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall finish the point and then I shall certainly give way. The hon. Gentleman need have no fears about that.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Was it the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)?

Mr. Garel-Jones: It was not.

I do not know why the Opposition Member concerned wants to keep the matter to himself. Perhaps it is partly for domestic reasons. If I had come home having lost a general election and £1,000, Mrs. Garel-Jones would have been exceedingly displeased with me. The hon. Member concerned may think that the puritan element of the Labour party—perhaps I should now call it the Christian socialist element—would find it distasteful that a member of the Labour party should be able to wager a considerable amount in that way. Whatever his reasons, I have thought it right to respect them.

I hope that the House and our constituents will think that neither of us comes out of this incident with any particular discredit. I also hope that punters across the country will wish that they had concluded, as I did and still do, that John Major is a good bet.

I make one final point on the matter. The House should know that the £1,000 was invested in a very pretty frock for Mrs. Garel-Jones and I am sure that Opposition and Conservative Members would approve of that.

Mr. Salmond: There is no disgrace in losing money backing one's own party, but there is some disgrace in winning money by betting against one's party. The right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) said that he wanted the Committee to be composed of those who reflected the range of foibles of hon. Members. By the same logic, would the right hon. Gentleman advocate that a criminal trial should take place in front of a jury of convicts?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can answer both questions. I would advise the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), if he is placing bets, to bet on John Major and not on his own party. Curiously enough, the best bet at the general election, which I did not make, was 50 to one on the Tories getting more seats in Scotland, which as the hon. Gentleman will recall, they successfully did.

I remind the hon. Gentleman, with respect, that we are not talking here about a criminal trial. We are talking—I now come to the more serious part of my speech—about a very serious matter—the reputation and conduct of hon. Members and the reputation of the House itself. We are not talking about a criminal trial.

Ms Corston: I suspect that my hon. Friends and Conservative Members may consider that the right hon. Gentleman's comments are something of a smokescreen. He referred to a wager between himself and another hon. Member as a little flutter. Is he suggesting that having 18 consultancies or directorships, or accepting money for tabling questions is the same as a little flutter which is immediately honoured?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Lady. I am coming to the main thrust of my speech. I was simply making the point—it is a fair point—that the House is not just a body of high-minded legislators, although I hope that it is that, too, but a group of men and women who, I hope and believe, broadly reflect not only the aspirations and hopes of the British people, but their whims and foibles. I hope that the House thinks that the illustration I have given is fair and that it does not reflect to the discredit of the Opposition Member concerned or myself.

In your statement to the House on 12 July, Madam Speaker, you indicated your thoughts to the House. The motion moved the following day by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), which followed from that, has led to the nominations, with one amendment, in the motion today. The nominations have been made in the usual way by the two main parties, with one representative from the minority parties.

The task we are asking our colleagues to undertake is a difficult one. They have to examine not only the specific incident complained of, but what you, Madam Speaker, referred to as the conduct of the newspaper concerned, the wider aspect of our relationship with the press and the even wider topic of the lobbying of Parliament.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—I have considerable respect, even affection, for the hon. Gentleman—has told the House that he regards the nominations as a stitch-up, a phrase repeated just now by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). It is the view of the hon. Member for Workington that no hon. Member who has any outside interests at all—not even, to be fair to him, because he has made it clear, Labour Members sponsored by trade unions or those with other outside interests—should be allowed to serve on the Committee. I think that that broadly is his view.

In fact, the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Sunderland, South are attempting to bring about a sort of reverse stitch-up of their own and, furthermore—I would contend—one that would irreparably damage the House and turn it into a refuge for unemployable people, third-rate people, one or two millionaires and a few perfectly admirable, if rather evangelical, campaigners.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What a definition of the Tory party.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sorry that hon. Members are treating this debate with such levity. There are evangelical campaigners on both sides of the House who make a significant contribution to the House, as does the hon. Member for Workington. However, I do not believe that the interests of the House or the country would be served if the House was made up of evangelical campaigners with a sprinkling of millionaires and a few unemployable people.

I very much hope that the House will support the motion on the Order Paper and brush aside the amendment of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, which is an attempt to stack the Committee in a way which accords with his view, and that of the hon. Member for Workington and perhaps some other Labour Members present, of the world.

As to the Committee as nominated, I have every confidence in both the Labour and Tory Members named that, between them, they represent a proper cross-section of today's House of Commons. As I said, the task that we are asking our colleagues to undertake, if the motion is carried, is a difficult one. The specific incident complained of is not one which reflects credit either on the hon. Members concerned or on the press and our relationship with them.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that our pay and allowances are inadequate to encourage people of quality to come here. If so, does he recall that we decide our own pay and allowances, and the two hon. Members who are the subject of this debate voted against the increase in our allowances two years ago, as did 50 other Tory Members who have substantial interests? If we decide the levels of our pay and allowances, we should set them at an adequate level, and we would not need to prostitute our work and time here to bodies outside.

Madam Speaker: I hope that the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) will not be led down that road because as he realises, and as does the House, all that we are discussing tonight is the motion on the Order Paper, which is a group of names.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I most certainly did not come into the House because I was attracted by the pay or, indeed, the conditions.

What I hope the nominated Members will not do is allow the hostile feelings that all of us sometimes feel towards the press to run away with them, and take measures against access to the press and so on which the House may, with hindsight, regret. I also hope that the Committee will not overreact to the foolish rather than wicked conduct of our colleagues. It will be for them, by their future conduct in the House, to regain and re-establish their reputations, and I am sure that that is what they will wish to do.

Finally, I hope that the Committee will not be over-prescriptive. We need new guidelines, but they should seek to strike a balance—I am sure that the names before us today will be the proper people to do this—between reinforcing the generally honest and open way in which hon. Members conduct themselves, and at the same time ensuring that the House continues to reflect the nation at large and to attract men and women who are capable of doing that. I hope that the House approves the motion, and I wish the Committee well in its deliberations.

7.34 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I enjoyed the speech of the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). It is the sort of speech that one would have expected him to give in the circumstances.

There was an interesting editorial in *The Sun* this morning. It is not a newspaper that I normally read, but I thought that I might commence my modest contribution this evening by quoting it because in many ways it sums up the dilemma in this debate. I quote:

"Fair's fair. Nine Tories are on the Committee investigating the 'questions for cash' affair.

Between them they hold 18 lucrative directorships and nine consultancies.

They will say that makes them eminently qualified to judge the issue.

We do not for one moment doubt their integrity.

But they must realise that many people fear a whitewash.

If they are happy to investigate fellow MPs, we have a suggestion for them . . .

Why not let the"

Murdoch-owned

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

"Sun decide the guilt of the"
Murdoch-owned
"Sunday Times."

In many ways, that sums up what the argument is all about.

What I intend to do tonight is to put the case for those Tory Back Benchers who were not considered for the Committee, a number of whom are present in the Chamber. Over the past week, the House of Commons has made an ass of itself: all over the country, people are wondering why the Government allowed themselves to be drawn into this appalling mess and why they allowed Parliament to be discredited. People want to know—as, indeed, do I and many of my hon. Friends—why, out of something like 320 Tory Members, it was impossible to find nine good men or women free of commercial influences and capable and competent enough to sit on the Committee of Privileges.

I will read out to the House the names of all those hon. Members who, clearly, were not considered. They have no commercial interests and would have made fine Members of the Committee. The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the hon. Members for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), for Lincoln (Sir K. Carlisle), for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), for Beverley (Mr. Cran), for Cheadle (Mr. Day), for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley), for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), for Norfolk, North (Sir R. Howell), for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg), for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), for Waveney (Mr. Porter), for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend), for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale), for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) are all free of commercial interests; all are able, I presume; and all are good Tories. Why were they not considered?

Among that list are four former Ministers, and as I look around I see that three of them are in the Chamber this evening. Why could not those hon. Members be put on the Committee? Why did the Government load the Committee with Members who have commercial interests?

Mr. Garel-Jones: How does the hon. Gentleman know that those hon. Members were not considered?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If they were considered, why were they rejected? Is there something that we are not to be told—that they are not competent? I see the hon. Member for Dartford, who is a former Education Minister; I understand that he had six years in the Conservative Government. The hon. Member for Eltham had five years in the Conservative Government.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Six.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman was a Minister of State.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose—*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I could seek the protection of the Chair, but I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Many Conservatives are astonished that the hon. Member has not been nominated by his party. Was he considered and was his name rejected? Did he refuse to serve?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) would have been a keen supporter of my nomination. I did not want to be a member of the Committee: I wanted to give evidence—I want to influence events.

I also believe that the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) should give evidence to the Committee; he has a lot to say and a formidable case to make as he clearly believes in all the consultancies. He needs the money, so why was he not given the opportunity to give evidence to the Privileges Committee when he could put the case for perks? As it is, he will be wrapped up, behind closed doors, in conditions of private deliberation by members of the Committee. Unless the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) is carried, the hon. Member for Shipley will be unable to speak freely on this matter, so that the public can hear what he has to say.

We heard what the hon. Member for Shipley had to say some years ago, in 1989, when the Select Committee on Members' Interests held an inquiry into lobbying. The hon. Members for Shipley and for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry) gave evidence. What the hon. Member for Shipley said was extremely interesting. It might be useful to the House to be reminded of that evidence, because it reveals why many of us have a problem with the hon. Gentleman's membership of the Privileges Committee. We believe that he has a conflict of interest with the terms and remit of that Committee.

In 1989, the hon. Member for Shipley was asked by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) about the activities of his consulting company. The hon. and learned Member asked:

"Can I ask you a more specific question: you tell us that you have been to see a Minister once in recent times"—

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Eltham remembers that meeting, as he was the Minister concerned—

"did you go in your capacity as a Member of Parliament leading a delegation, or in your professional capacity as a director of the company?"

The hon. Member for Shipley replied:

"I took the deputation as a director of Westminster Communications and they were a client. That was made quite clear to the Minister"—

the hon. Member for Eltham

"I took very little part, apart from introducing the people, who were far more knowledgable about the industry than I was. I certainly took no part in it in the role as a Member of Parliament."

The hon. Member for Eltham seems to have forgotten that meeting, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Shipley will recall it.

Mr. Bottomley *rose—*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do not worry: I will send the hon. Gentleman a copy—

Mr. Bottomley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member is making a number of references to me, among others, which are not all accurate. It would be a kindness if he could make the points that he wants to make without necessarily dragging in everyone else. To describe the meeting is fine, but to say what I did or did not know is not right. The hon. Gentleman would be doing the House a service if he got on with what he is trying to say.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me, but if the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) wishes to catch my eye to rebut anything now being said, I will certainly be able to call him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I presume from that point of order that the hon. Member for Eltham does recall that meeting and what he said at it.

At the 1989 inquiry, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East went on to ask the hon. Member for Shipley:

"Do you think it was easier for you to obtain that meeting because you were a Member of Parliament who happened to be a consultant as well?"

The hon. Member for Shipley replied:

"Well, it would not be any hindrance".

That reply is what worries some of us. We are genuinely concerned that someone who feels that that is the way to conduct himself as a Member of the House of Commons —by running a public relations company, having access to Ministers and arranging meetings for clients—should serve on the Privileges Committee and work its procedures in defence of a principle that we find quite unacceptable. We reject that approach.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) referred to eunuchs in the House of Commons. Many of my hon. Friends may not be pleased by what I am about to say, but I do not believe that hon. Members should not be directors of companies or consultants to companies if they so wish. It is their choice. If they want to do that, it is their choice and it is for their electors to decide whether they should be free to do so.

What I object to is the fact that, under the current rules, those hon. Members can use parliamentary proceedings to arrange the very meetings to which I have just referred, to table motions, to ask questions, to lobby civil servants and to lobby their colleagues. I object to them using all the privileges that the House offers to further the interests of their clients, customer companies and consultancies.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The hon. Gentleman has not referred yet to trade union sponsorship and membership of the Privileges Committee. Does he draw a distinction between trade union sponsorship and consultancies and directorships?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: For the umpteenth time in the past week, I will explain what that sponsorship means. I am one of those creatures who are sponsored, but in those nine years of sponsorship I have never received one penny from the trade union. I do not receive money now from it and I will never receive money from it. There are no conditions in which the trade union would ever dream of offering me any money. If the hon. Gentleman can imprint it on his grey matter, that sponsorship means that there is a relationship between Unison and my constituency party whereby the trade union transfers a sum of money to the constituency party, which is used to serve people and their complaints about employment, social security, housing, the Inland Revenue or whatever.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I am in no doubt about the hon. Gentleman's position, which he has made quite plain, but I am in some doubt about how he feels about those hon. Members who write articles for newspapers, appear on television and on radio and are well remunerated for it. Does he put them in the same category as those who are directors, as the former frequently peddle their form of prejudice and try to promote various causes? Does the hon. Gentleman put them in the same category?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. If the hon. Gentleman does, he shows a misunderstanding of the debate. It is interesting that last weekend I was denied an interview on the "Breakfast with Frost" programme because the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) told the programme makers that he would not appear on television with me. He was obviously scared stiff of being asked critical questions about what was on the transcript of his conversation, which in my view he has misrepresented to the House. That, too, is a matter for the Committee to deal with.

It is important to consider the remit that you set for the Privileges Committee, Madam Speaker, and how it can conduct its inquiry. In your statement to the House, you said:

"I should like to make it clear that the Committee will have power to inquire not only into the matter of the particular complaint, but into the facts surrounding and reasonably connected with it, and into the principles of the law and custom of privilege which are concerned. I hope that it will use that power for the assistance of the House in a difficult area."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 829.]

I believe that that was an excellent remit because it was wide and covers all the area of concern that many of my hon. Friends wish the inquiry to consider.

We know that the inquiry will cover the question of entrapment—there are varying views about whether that took place—and the two hon. Members concerned, but I believe that there is another issue of far more importance that than specific matter. I do not believe that the hon. Members for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) are particularly relevant to the debate. We have moved on from them. They have been punished by their constituents and perhaps even by their local associations. Of course, the Committee will want to take a position on that, but the central issue now is what we do in future about the rule which gives Members the right to sell themselves to the highest bidder in a way—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must bring the hon. Member back to the motion, which concerns the names being put forward to form the Committee. Perhaps the hon. Member will deal with the motion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I shall lead directly to that.

If the remit of the Committee is as I have described, its business is consultancy. I am arguing that many of the Members whose names are set out in the motion will be faced with a conflict of interest when it comes to an inquiry into consultancy. I remember the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests of 1990-91—it was the Committee's first report. In paragraph 24, to which I referred last week, we—that is: the Committee—stated,

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

"when a member of a committee, particularly the Chairman, has a pecuniary interest which is directly affected by a particular inquiry or when he or she considers that a personal interest may reflect upon the work of the committee or its subsequent report, the Member should stand aside from the Committee proceedings relating to it."

That was endorsed by the House late one night without a vote. So the House has approved that Members must stand aside from the Committee if a conflict of interest exists.

We have a remit to examine consultancies and we have Members who are consultants on the Committee. I put it to the Leader of the House that there is a direct conflict of interest and that there will be many occasions during the course of the inquiry when, if the rule embodied in paragraph 24 is to be followed, many Members will have to withdraw. I want to know whether they will do so.

We are told that it is custom and tradition for the Committee to meet in private. The members of the Committee will not deliberate publicly. What assurances can I have, on the basis that no one on the Committee can disclose what is happening behind closed doors, that whenever the issue of consultancy arises—it is an issue that the inquiry must address as it is one of the three pillars of its work—Members who face a conflict of interest will withdraw? Who will carry out the policing? Who will consider the issue at every stage? Will the Clerk do so and advise the Chairman that the moment the conflict referred to in paragraph 24 arises, those Members who face it must withdraw?

The relevant resolution suggests that, when the Committee deals with its report, Members who face a conflict of interest should stand aside. Are we to presume that when the Committee deals with the subject of consultancy—this will be behind closed doors in a deliberative session—those Members who have consultancies and directorships will withdraw from the proceedings if those interests constitute a conflict of interest? If not, they would be in breach of a resolution of the House, and that would be wrong.

We will not let the issue go away. We will persist in raising it. We will not know what is going on behind closed doors. We might ask the Leader of the House every week—he will be a member of the Committee—whether the rule embodied in paragraph 24 is being enforced. The minutes will be published. In 1981, when I brought a complaint about Mr. Ian MacGregor, the chairman of the British Steel Corporation, the minutes of the Committee were published.

We shall study the Divisions that take place during the Committee's proceedings. There may well be Divisions. The Committee will be unlike previous Privileges Committees in some respects because its membership will include those who are not Privy Councillors. It might be more controversial in the way in which it works. The internal dynamics of the Committee might not be as consensual as on previous occasions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) always tells us that the Committee has a tendency to drive itself into the sand.

There are aspects of the Committee's work that cause us problems. I want to know, as do my right hon. and hon. Friends, whether Members will withdraw in the event of a conflict arising. That is critical. If the Leader of the House has found a curious way of justifying the membership of the Committee, he must know that it is one that cannot be sustained publicly. He has not advanced any such argument at the Dispatch Box. He merely moved the motion. He did not deal with the issue of membership. Will he deal with it when he replies? If he cannot deal with it in a way which justifies the Committee's membership, does that mean that Members will have to withdraw? The only way to ensure that the Committee has credibility in the future is either to withdraw the motion or for Conservative Members to enter the Opposition Lobby this evening and vote against the motion. As it stands, it is nonsense.

7.55 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I shall make some complaints in my relatively short contribution to the debate. First, I believe that there is an organisation which gets sponsored Members to meet, who exclude one Member at least who is fully qualified to join the meeting. These are the meetings of the sponsored Members of the Transport and General Workers union. A significant number of Members—they are all Opposition Members—get cash for votes. They have their election expenses paid so that they can get into the House. I do not know how anyone can say that that is not a personal benefit because getting into the House is one of the greatest honours for any citizen of the United Kingdom.

The group of TGWU Members excludes a member of that union who entered the House without cash for votes. I put it to you, Madam Speaker, that you should refer to the Committee of Privileges the issue that any group which sponsors individuals to be elected to the House should give consideration to accepting people who have no disqualification.

I oppose the amendment of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), and I shall explain why. If one in three Opposition Members is sponsored—I think that virtually all members of the Opposition Front Bench are sponsored—we are beginning to see organisations buying people of influence, in so far as being on the Opposition Front Bench is a position of influence. I hope that the Committee of Privileges, with the membership proposed in the amended motion moved by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, will take account of the broader issues, which include cash for votes.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman pay the political levy as a member of the Transport and General Workers Union?

Mr. Bottomley: Of course I do not. If I did, I would be qualified to vote for the Labour party leadership.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member will now refer to the motion and deal with the names set out within it.

Mr. Bottomley: If you had asked me, Madam Speaker, whether I was qualified to vote as a member of the Co-op, I would have said yes. I am inclined to opt out of that as well. In fact, I did not vote.

I want to know whether an Opposition Member—not only those who have spoken so far—could have stood for Parliament without being a member of a trade union. Which Opposition Member now in the Chamber could have stood for election to this place, under Labour party rules, without being a member of a trade union?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member's argument hardly refers to the motion. He is a good debater, and I hope that he will follow the rules of the House and return to the motion.

Mr. Bottomley: The relevant rules require that, if someone is eligible to be a member of a trade union, he or she has to be a member to stand as a Labour candidate. If Opposition Members do not know that, they have not read Labour party rules.

If the House takes the view of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)— *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman continues to interrupt, he will demonstrate that he feels that he is on dodgier ground now than when he was speaking. He spent 20 minutes saying, in effect, that if one Member was in a family who imported ormolu clocks from Italy and another was involved in a family wine business, if the one in the clock business gave up his interest in the business he would be qualified for membership of the Committee of Privileges, but the Member involved with the family wine business would be disqualified if he chose to continue to be so involved.

Let us say that the family who imported ormolu clocks sold the business and received £1 million for it, and had £100,000 coming in for doing nothing—that might be the Labour point of view—while the family with the wine business continued to trade. Would the continuation of the wine business disqualify the Member who was connected with it? I disagree with that.

The biggest disqualification of the Committee of Privileges is to have on it people who can be told what to do by the Whips. Those who cannot be told what to do by the Whips are the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party, as he is elected by his fellows, and the chairman of the 1922 Committee.

As a Labour Member, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, has decided to substitute his judgment for that of Tory Back-Bench Members who elected my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) to be chairman of the 1922 Committee. Had my hon. Friend continued as chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South would no doubt have objected to him. Had I become chairman of the 1922 Committee—I am not volunteering for the job—he probably would have objected to me as well. It is far better to say that, if the customary practice is to appoint the leaders of Back-Bench Members, it is not for Opposition Members to object.

The kernel of the speech of the hon. Member for Workington was that people who earn money outside—directors, advisers and consultants—should be disqualified. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not what he said."] The essence of his point was that hon. Members should withdraw from the Committee of Privileges in certain circumstances. If I have misdescribed what he said, he should let me know now; if he remains in his place I shall presume that I am correct.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall give way, but I am not sure whether it is worth doing so.

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to find that it is educational to give way. The point that the Opposition are making is that money that comes into hon. Members' pockets for their parliamentary work and actions that they take within the House should be stopped. The hon. Gentleman is making a fair point—that no Opposition Member should receive money directly from a trade union. The Register of Members' Interests, however, shows that 14 per cent. of Labour Members receive money directly from outside—from trade unions or consultancies —and 85 per cent. of eligible Conservative Members receive money from outside. The Committee should consist of Members who receive no money directly from outside for their parliamentary work.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been paying much attention during the past Parliament. The Labour party's health spokesman is sponsored by a health union and its transport spokesman is sponsored by a transport union. I hope that the Committee of Privileges will decide that this is the last Parliament in which that will occur. Why cannot Opposition Front-Bench Members give up their cash for votes and their union sponsorship while they are on the Front Bench? That is a challenge to them. Can they not get elected without the money?

They say that it is of no personal benefit. Why will they not say, "I will not take the money while I am a Front-Bench spokesperson"? If they intend to stand for the shadow Cabinet, they should give up the sponsorship. They may then be admitted to the Committee of Privileges in accordance with the prejudices of the hon. Member for Workington.

The critical issue is the fact that the Committee must produce a report on the newspaper aspect. I hope that the House will reject the amendment and accept the motion. I also hope that the Committee will produce a separate report on the newspaper aspect rather than an omnibus report dealing with membership, with the general circumstances to which you, Madam Speaker, referred, and with the newspaper aspect. I would like the chance to give evidence to say that Members who are appointed should take this final test: they should do only those things that they are willing to tell their local newspaper. If they are willing to say it, they can do it: they will then be in the clear.

8.3 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I support the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), but I start on a point of disagreement. He said that no hon. Member had a vested interest in seeing the House brought into disrepute. I declare that I have an interest in seeing the House brought into disrepute. I spend a great deal of my political time trying to ensure that the House of Commons is brought into disrepute with the Scottish people. My modest efforts in that direction are often overtaken by Conservative Members who inadvertently do more damage to the House than I have yet been able to do.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: I may give way to the hon. Gentleman later, if he will contain himself for a few moments.

I shall make three simple points about this motion, but I shall be happy if the House, in its wisdom, ignores my advice entirely because the Scottish people will then continue to hold it in ill repute.

First, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who has left our proceedings for the time being, said that he wanted the Committee to draw up a code

[Mr. Salmond]

of practice to include a full cross-section of the House, reflecting all its interests, activities and foibles. That is fundamentally incorrect.

If people with consultancies, whose parliamentary activities may be influenced by remuneration from elsewhere, want to justify their case to the Committee, they should do so to people without consultancies. With respect to what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, the same should apply to trade union sponsorship of constituency parties. If that issue is considered by the Committee, it should be justified to a Committee whose members are not in the same position.

My second point refers to the two or more hon. Members whose cases the Committee may consider. How could a Committee report be credible if the Committee is stuffed full of hon. Members with consultancies, or Members whom the press could accuse of having a vested interest? If any hon. Member believes that a Committee report of that composition would be credible, whether or not they read *Sun* editorials, he or she must be blind, deaf and pretty dumb. To believe that would seriously underrate the anxiety and contempt illustrated by the public's reaction to the events of the past few days.

It is a simple point of logic that, if hon. Members want the Committee report to be credible, it should not be vulnerable to the attacks that we have already seen in the papers.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

My third point is simple, and refers specifically to the right hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) and the subject of the amendment. I have heard the right hon. Gentleman described as the shop steward of Tory Back-Bench Members. I do not know whether it was his own description or one foisted on him. If the right hon. Gentleman is a shop steward, one would expect him, as in an industrial tribunal, to appear before the Committee for the defence rather than to be on the Committee.

I hope that the House continues to ignore those three simple points, and thus continues to be held in large-scale disrepute by the Scottish people. None the less, I suggest that the House pays attention to the amendment.

8.7 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Two assumptions underlie the amendment: first, that the only vested interest that matters is financial; and, secondly, that it is impossible for hon. Members, no matter how experienced, honest or sincere, to suspend their personal judgment while considering a matter of national importance or significance to the House.

It is perfectly clear that some hon. Members have a passionate commitment to certain causes. In the view of most of us, those causes frequently blind their judgment when they consider important matters, whether they are deeply committed to a faith, have had an experience that has coloured their judgment, or are under pressure from relations or friends.

Let us take a hypothetical example. If a Member of the House who is either still a member of a firm of solicitors, or has been for many years a solicitor, speaks about legal aid, how do we know whether he is speaking about legal aid objectively, or whether his judgment is coloured by his experience? It is, of course, impossible to know.

The reason why I believe that the House should be wary about trying to go down a path that, in effect, attempts to make people either saints or a type of eunuch, is that I believe that people want from the House the wide range of aspirations, beliefs, prejudices and occupations that they can find outside. It is a criticism of the House that, on the whole, the range of occupations in it is too narrow, and it is a great mistake for the House to go too far down the road of trying to define precisely what is and is not an interest that should be taken into account.

Secondly, I believe that it is common to hon. Members on both sides of the House that, when considering a matter, they suspend their personal view. How many Members of the House, for example, have been visited in their surgeries by people who, in their view, are despicable—unattractive, unpleasant people, with a cause to pursue of which they disapprove? However, because, at some point in the game, those people have been subjected to injustice by the system, it is our duty and our privilege, and indeed our job, to try to ensure that, at least in that narrow respect, their injustice is rectified.

The capacity to suspend one's personal view is therefore an integral part of being a Member of Parliament. I accept that some hon. Members have enormous difficulty in doing so, but, on the whole, the longer one spends in this place, the better one becomes at separating one's personal interests and the objective principle.

I believe that hon. and right hon. Members of the seniority of those who have been proposed for the Committee, including my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), have arrived at a point where their objectivity can be relied on. If the sceptics on the Opposition Benches care to reflect, they will see that no circumstance is more likely to reinforce their capacity to be objective than the fact that they are under such intense scrutiny, and that their interests have been so widely declared and canvassed.

For those reasons, I would reject the amendment.

8.12 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I have to declare a non-interest, in being a member of a trade union that is not affiliated to the Labour party, and I am not sponsored by any union.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) is right, up to a point. One of the qualities that Members of Parliament should have is that of being able to distinguish matters in which they might have a self-interest from those that affect the interests of their constituents. Madam Speaker, you have asked us to view this matter in relation to the names on a list before us. I hope that what I say is in order, because I shall ask the questions that my constituents will ask about that list—the questions that they have a right to ask—and about the criteria that should be applied to Members who are on it, or perhaps not on it. I hope that that brings all that I have to say into order.

The public outside, and indeed even the scribes, may have misunderstood that the matter before us is one of privilege. It is a question whether anything is being done that interferes with the proper privileges of the House to do its work, and a question of protecting the public and our citizens. That is, as I understand it, what privilege is about.

It so happens that we have not had a matter of privilege in the current Parliament, and the customary procedures for appointing a Committee on Privileges have been followed through, even though the specific matter that has now been referred to it is unusual. My first argument, therefore, is that we have, in a sense, a difficulty in our procedures, because, when we look at the list, we are not specifically referring to the problem before us, which has arisen from the behaviour of two Members, but appointing a Committee to defend the privileges of the House, which intrinsically are the privileges of the public.

My second argument is that the problem is not new. In the late 1960s, a Member of the House was referred to the Privileges Committee, or another Committee that was set up, because he was involved in a foreign Government. That Committee, under the chairmanship of the then right hon. George Strauss, reported on remuneration for services arising directly out of membership of the House.

Two broad solutions were canvassed; that there should be a register—which there was not then—and that there should be a code of conduct. The Strauss Committee came down on the side of a code of conduct, because it was felt at that time that the introduction of a register might not only be a safeguard, but be used as a means of license. Some people may feel that that may be occurring.

I shall read part of the conclusions of the Strauss Committee, HC.57 69/70. The Committee advocated a code of conduct, and the second paragraph was as follows:

"That it is contrary to the usage and derogatory to the dignity of the House that a Member should bring forward by speech or question, or advocate in this House or among his fellow Members any bill, motion, matter or cause for a fee, payment, retainer or reward, direct or indirect, which he has received, is receiving or expects to receive (paragraph 110)."

That was not adopted.

It so happened that, after other problems in the early 1970s, the solution of a register was adopted. I confess that, as an advocate of that, I may have been a little too trusting in what the hon. Member for Mid-Kent properly pointed out, because I regarded a register as protection for Members, such as solicitors, who perhaps ought to be in a difficult position, and as a warning fence, so that, if that fence was transgressed, it would be visible.

Perhaps it might have been wiser to have a code of conduct. I believe that my constituents, looking at the list, would apply the Strauss Committee's criterion, and if they did so, the list would be considered unsatisfactory in many respects.

8.17 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): In my judgment, the names on the Order Paper should be trusted to uphold the traditions of the conventions of the House. There is great anxiety outside the House about the events of the past couple of weeks.

Before I go any further, I should declare that, as well as having been a journalist in the past, I have no outside consultancies or sponsorships, and I am no longer a member of the National Union of Journalists, but I am a director of my own small publishing business, which helps to publish my own books.

There is anxiety outside the House about the conduct of hon. Members, and I think that it is up to the Committee to decide exactly what took place, and whether the conduct of those Members is as reported by the press.

In your wisdom, Madam Speaker, you decided, when you announced your decision, to ensure that the Committee would not be a hanging committee to sit in judgment on those individuals, but that you would take the issue as a much wider one, and examine the conduct of the newspaper involved. Only some of the transcripts have been published so far. There is considerable disquiet outside the House—

Madam Speaker: Order. I take it that the hon. Gentleman is just getting into his stride, but I think that he has had long enough to do that. He must speak to the motion, which is very narrow. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has the Order Paper with him. The motion relates to the names of the members of the Committee. All we are debating tonight is whether those names are acceptable to the House or whether we should accept the amendment. That is the narrow motion.

Mr. Allason: I fully accept your guidance, Madam Speaker, as always.

I shall say a word in defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), whose name has been somewhat traduced during the past few minutes of debate. As a Back Bencher, I can say that he is a doughty defender of Back Benchers' rights, and is widely respected on both sides of the House. Furthermore, he is no lackey of the Whips, and would be no part of a stitch-up by the Government Whips to whitewash this event.

There is grave disquiet about what has taken place, and it extends to members of the press, who are also extremely worried by the events of the past few weeks. I was trained as a journalist by, among others, Desmond Wilcox, and I worked with journalists like Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman. We worked on exposing Whitehall cover-ups.

If I have a criticism of the names on the Order Paper, it is that there is no journalist on the list. If there were, it would provide an opportunity to examine the conduct of the journalists who participated in the exercise. Maurice Chittenden, a former member of the staff of the *News of the World*, is the "Insight" editor of *The Sunday Times*. His role in the affair will have to be examined.

Everyone in the House would agree that if, as claimed, six months ago an individual complained that he had been asked for a sum of money in return for a question, that would be a serious matter. Whether it is right that that occurred remains to be seen. If the list on the Order Paper included a journalist, it would be possible to examine the standards of journalism that *The Sunday Times* has exercised.

Dr. Spink: Does my hon. Friend agree that the members of the Committee would be well advised to consider the specific events first, and leave the general policy until later, because general policy made in the heat of specific events often turns out—

Madam Speaker: Order. The House is not giving guidance to the Committee, but discussing the make-up of the Committee.

Mr. Allason: The make-up of the Committee would be strengthened if it included a journalist, particularly somebody with access to Fleet street. I believe that, far from there having been research into a complaint that occurred six months ago, an investigation was conducted by *The Sunday Times* in a short time because Roger Cook's programme on Ian Greer Associates could not be shown. If

[Mr. Allason]

the list on the Order Paper were properly to reflect the desire of the House to get to the bottom of all the events, there should be an opportunity to cast wider than the list.

The House has an important responsibility this evening. It has to protect its rights and privileges. It also has to ensure that its integrity is retained, and that there is confidence outside the House, not just in hon. Members on both sides, but also in the membership of the Committee. I believe that the Committee, as described on the Order Paper, will command that confidence.

I also believe that, if the report is published and if it is to gain widespread respect, it will certainly have to examine the conduct of *The Sunday Times* and its journalists with the same determination as it examines the conduct of the two hon. Members whose reputations have been so traduced.

8.25 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I had better declare my interest from the start. I am sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers. In fact, the Bolsover constituency was sponsored long before I came to this place. It should be put on record that in many cases, but not all, sponsored Members of Parliament inherit sponsored seats.

I do not agree with the National Union of Mineworkers on occasion, and I vote against it in the House. Not long ago, Arthur Scargill said that the union was in favour of proportional representation. I said that I was not on board and I fought in the union to change the policy—and succeeded. When Jo Gormley got the National Union of Mineworkers to accept a pay policy under the Labour Government in 1974 and 1979, I told him to get stuffed and said I would not support a pay policy. He said that I would be de-sponsored if I carried on. I told him to get on with it. We must set the record straight about where some of us stand on this issue.

Way back in the 1970s, when the Maudling case and the Poulson scandal took place, we set up a Committee the same as the one proposed today, and had a debate about setting it up. It was set up with Members who belonged to the gentlemen's club—there were moonlighters and consultants. Some of them were from the Labour party, but the gentlemen's club decided that those involved should not be touched, even though councillors went to goal for lesser offences in the Poulson scandal.

We can hardly get anybody from the House of Commons to judge what the two hon. Members or others have been doing when relationships have been set up—relationships where some people belong to one party and some to another. Those with consultancies could hardly decide that those two hon. Members should be condemned, for the good reason that they are probably tabling questions by the barrel-load all the time, and nobody knows how much they are being paid for that.

It would be difficult for a Committee of the House of Commons to judge those two hon. Members. If a public inquiry can be set up to examine the conduct of Ministers in relation to the Scott inquiry, we should do the same on this occasion. It is not possible to have people in this cosy little place judging members of the same club.

Although I shall vote for the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) with alacrity, and vote against the setting up of the Committee, I do not think that that is satisfactory. We complain all the time about the police examining complaints about the police. We complain about all the organisations that examine their own affairs—we say that of Lloyd's and the City of London. Surely it would be wrong to agree to set up a Committee of Members of Parliament—irrespective of where they stand, although many of them are right hon. Members—to look into the conduct of other Members of Parliament.

I am not arguing merely because of the money aspect—people form relationships one with another that might have nothing to do with money. During the Maudling case, people said that some Labour Members might vote to kick Maudling out of Parliament—not many of us did: I think it was about 20—but might vote to keep Albert Roberts, as he was sponsored by the NUM. Of course I did not, but that is what happens in this place.

That is why it is important to tell the public that it is not satisfactory to have Marcus Fox or anyone with consultancies on the Committee so that it is overwhelmed by directorships. However we frame it, if we here are to judge two other Members of Parliament, the result is bound to be tainted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is right to campaign to improve the Register and reduce payments, but I am clear that we cannot satisfactorily deal with the issue by setting up a Committee of Members of Parliament to judge other Members of Parliament. That Committee will not come up with the correct answer to satisfy the public.

8.29 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has demonstrated clearly and convincingly that he will do in this House what he believes to be right. I wonder why he is not willing to give the same credit to other hon. Members.

I oppose the amendment because, if I correctly understood the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), and those speaking in support of it, they were basically saying that a Member could not sit on the Committee if he had an outside interest that arose directly from his membership of this House.

I find it astonishing that those hon. Members could even make such comments, when everyone knows that numerous hon. Members write articles in favour of specific matters or in support of special interest groups. Hon. Members regularly write columns in national newspapers, and they are well paid for doing so. To try to convince me and others that that work is not a direct result of their membership of this House is incredible nonsense. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) regularly writes vitriolic columns—I am sure that he is well paid for it—trying to denigrate this Parliament. He acknowledged that work, but he failed to acknowledge the fact that he is probably well paid for it.

I have never understood why, if someone is a company director for 20 or 30 years before he comes to this place, somehow, the minute that he enters the House, it is wrong for him to continue being a director. That is nonsense. It is no more wrong to continue being a director than it is to continue being a lawyer, a teacher, an economist or someone writing lengthy articles.

The plain truth is that we bring to the House all our different experiences, all of which are valuable. The

members of the Committee should reflect that experience so that they can make their judgment on hon. Members knowing all the aspects of being a Member of the House.

8.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): When the issue first came to the attention of the House, we had to decide three things—should there be an inquiry, how wide should it be and who should conduct it? It is the Labour party's long-established view that there should be a wide inquiry, and that it should be conducted by the House rather than being an internal inquiry by the Conservative party. Following the passing of last Wednesday's motion, that is also the view of the House. The issue we have to decide now is who should conduct that inquiry.

I was very keen—my motion on Wednesday reflected this—that the House should look not just at the serious issues dealt with in the article in *The Sunday Times*, but at the wider issues that arise from the article and from your statement a week last Tuesday, Madam Speaker. The Committee will examine issues such as the complaint raised more recently about the way in which our banqueting facilities are booked by those who have interests in public affairs companies— *[Interruption.]* The matter is relevant, as I shall show later.

We are considering, as the public would expect us to do, not just how to make progress, but who should serve on the Committee. The public expect us to get on with that, and to do so with integrity. If someone has a long-standing involvement with a public affairs company—perhaps even one that regularly books the banqueting facilities—it would be difficult for him to consider with an open mind the rights and wrongs of providing the facilities of this place for what are essentially Conservative and business interests. I do not believe that the public expect hon. Members with extensive business interests to be judge in their own cause.

That point was very well made in the debate last Wednesday. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) intervened on me while I was speaking to my motion in as neutral a way as I could. I responded by saying that I thought that the point he had made had been taken on board by both sides of the House. That was my understanding at the time. I must tell my hon. Friend that, as the person who moved that motion, I have taken no part and have had no involvement in even the selection of names from the Labour party, let alone the selection of names from the Conservative party.

The issue that arises not just for the Labour party but for the Conservative party is to consider carefully who is to be appointed to the Committee. I have every confidence in the nominations from the Labour party. We have taken great care to nominate Members whom we believe the public will judge to be well qualified to serve, and who will be acceptable to the whole House. I have to say—this will not be popular with some of my hon. Friends—that it is not for us to choose the Conservative party nominees. We cannot pick each other's sides. Certainly we would not allow the Conservative party to say who the Labour nominees should be.

However, my saying that does not relieve the Conservative party of the obligation to behave in the way the public expect, which is exactly the way that the Labour party has behaved. It is important for the reputation of the House that the whole Committee is free of the charge of conflict of interests. The ultimate judge will be the public verdict on the Committee's report. Anything less than the most vigorous inquiry and review, untainted by any special pleading, will be very injurious to the reputation of the House.

8.36 pm

Mr. Newton: You, Madam Speaker, may appreciate that I find myself in a position which, if not unique, is certainly unprecedented for almost a quarter of a century. I am responding to a debate on the establishment of a Committee of Privileges, and I am advised that it is the first time since 1970 that a motion on the membership of such a Committee has not been put and accepted forthwith.

That did not happen last night. I make no complaint about that; I am simply making the point that it is unusual for the House not to accept a motion along the lines of that tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) and instead to want to debate the merits of the names contained in the motion.

Another reason that I make that point is that there is an added difficulty for me. For reasons of convention, which the House understands, the motion is not in my name—although it is appropriate that I should speak to it—but in fact contains my name. I shall be a member of the Committee if the House accepts the motion, and even if it were instead to accept the amendment, because no one has been unkind enough to try to remove me from the Committee.

I echo a remark made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) about the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours): "Although I sometimes find him tiresome, I have a very considerable respect for him." The hon. Gentleman put to me a considerable number of questions to which I suspect he knows I cannot properly respond tonight, for the reasons that I have given. Not only am I proposed as a member of the Committee, but if the normal conventions of such Committees are followed, I shall be its Chairman.

Virtually every comment that has been put tonight and the specific questions raised seem to ask me to prejudge either the view that the Committee should take of its remit, the way in which it should work, or even, to a degree, the conclusions that it should reach. I simply do not think that it would be proper for me to attempt to respond to that against the background that I have described.

I simply wish to repeat what I said at the outset—that in my judgment the nominations reflect the established and accepted precedents, including the membership of both the chairman of the parliamentary Labour party and the chairman of the 1922 Committee. I believe that the proposed Committee—very much including my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox)—is one in which the House can have confidence in the discharge of the responsibility that it has laid on it. I therefore hope that the House will reject the amendment, and accept the motion as tabled.

Amendment proposed to the proposed motion, To leave out "Sir Marcus Fox".—[*Mr. Mullin.*]

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 43, Noes 158.

Division No. 302] **[8.40 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Home Robertson, John
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
McAvoy, Thomas
MacShane, Denis
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Paul Flynn and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:
The House divided: Ayes 151, Noes 23.

Division No. 303] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry

Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood, and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cox, Tom
Dalyell, Tam
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Home Robertson, John
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Primarolo, Dawn
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Paul Flynn and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That Mr. Attorney General, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Tony Benn, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Bill Michie, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. John Morris, Mr. Tony Newton, Sir Cranley Onslow, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Peter Shore, Sir James Spicer and Mr. Alan Williams be members of the Committee of Privileges.

Hinchingbrooke Hospital (Maternity Services)

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

9.2 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Perhaps I should begin by explaining that women in Cambridge have choices about where they can have their babies under the national health service. They can choose to go to Addenbrooke's, which is high-tech and is appropriate for natural births and high-risk babies. There is also Hinchingbrooke hospital, which, although it lies in the Prime Minister's constituency of Huntingdon, nevertheless is within travelling distance of Cambridge.

The advantage of Hinchingbrooke for many women is that it is small, more personal and is organised on completely different lines from the large teaching hospital at Addenbrooke's. It has a rather unusual organisation. It has no registrars, only consultants, nursing staff and senior house officers. A significant number of women will choose Hinchingbrooke because it is small and because of its personal nature, but perhaps more importantly, because of its very low perinatal mortality rates. I am sure that the Minister will want to stress that point when he responds.

If a hospital normally deals with low-risk cases, it would be expected to have a low perinatal mortality rate. I suspect that the lowest perinatal mortality rate of all is among those women whose babies are born at home. I hope that that will not be a statistical argument to be used to justify the inaction on the case that I want to talk about this evening.

Choices have always been available to women in Cambridge, and I hope that that will continue. When I telephoned the chief executive of Cambridge district health authority this morning, he told me that there had been rumours that Hinchingbrooke was under some threat of closure. It is important to the women in my constituency who want a choice—and also to the women in the Prime Minister's constituency who want a local hospital—that it remains open.

I certainly do not intend to fuel the closure rumours; nor do I want the hospital to be closed. I must add, however, that at least two serious complaints have been made about it by women in my constituency. It is vital for confidence in the system to be restored, and for women who have their babies at Hinchingbrooke to be convinced that past mistakes will not recur.

This is not just a case of everyone being more vigilant, or of blaming one or two individuals. It is a case of engaging in an open, honest and frank discussion about the things that have gone wrong, and ensuring that management procedures are in place to minimise the risks in future.

The case that I am going to describe involves both clinical and management failure. I know that managers at Hinchingbrooke will say that they have spent many hours investigating the complaints. That is true; but what has emerged after many hours, days or even weeks of investigation is a complete whitewash. There is no formal indication of where the mistakes were made, no indication of the procedures that were not followed or were not in existence and no indication that the management want to

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

do anything except hush it all up and hope that there will be no unfavourable publicity. The point of this debate is to bring the issues out into the open.

I am sure that the health service commissioner, who produced a report recently, will agree with some of the points that I am going to make. His most recent report states:

"It is not just inefficient, it is pitiful and shabby when NHS authorities make out that they welcome complaints but then deal woefully with them."

The complaint that I shall be examining has been dealt with woefully, and inadequately.

My frustration, and that of my constituents, is compounded by the fact that the responsible authorities are no longer democratically accountable to the electorate whom they serve. There is no one, apart from the Secretary of State, to whom I can turn and say, "You are the elected representative who is responsible for this mess." There is no one to whom I can say, "You are the person who is accountable at the end of the day."

Trusts and district health authorities no longer have elected representatives who are accountable to local people. The trusts have appointees who are well paid for their services, who hold their meetings in secret and who do not have to listen or respond to my complaints or those of my constituents. They treat the trust as a business, maximising its profits, trying to ensure good public relations and making certain that the district health authorities will continue to purchase their services by providing them as cheaply as possible. There is no incentive for the trust to admit its mistakes or fully investigate the complaints, as the following account will reveal.

I referred earlier to two serious cases. They are the cases of Mrs. Cheree Graves-Bacchus and Ruth McCall. I know that Mrs. Graves-Bacchus is deeply unhappy with the clinical treatment and the management of her complaint; however, the case that I shall use as an illustration, and describe in some depth, is that of Ruth McCall. I intend to describe in graphic detail the events as they occurred.

The story began on 28 February 1992 when Ruth was admitted to Hinchingbrooke, 19 weeks pregnant and experiencing labour contractions. Sadly, the baby was stillborn four days later, at 20 weeks' gestation. A post-mortem revealed that the cause of the premature, pre-viable delivery was infection with the bacterium group B streptococcus. That bacterium causes virulent uterine infection, but it is treatable and, if caught at an early stage, it can be treated with antibiotics.

At a follow-up appointment with the consultant at Hinchingbrooke, Mr. John Hare—Ruth's own consultant —assured her that any future pregnancy would be monitored closely for the same infection and that she should also regularly take preventive antibiotic treatment.

Ruth became pregnant again and two months later a swab taken by her general practitioner showed another bacterial infection. She was prescribed antibiotics and the pregnancy continued. She was considered a high-risk case and was seen by Mr. Hare every two weeks and was regularly prescribed swabs and antibiotics.

As you can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, following her previous experience Ruth feels a certain amount of anxiety and she is given counselling for this by the midwife counsellor at Hinchingbrooke, Pat Ingham. She has been told that following her previous experience changes have been made at the obstetrics unit and that, first, patients would be allocated to the continuing care of the on-duty consultant until their own consultant became available. Secondly—this is significant—she was told that all premature labour patients would be given immediate antibiotic drug therapy.

That did a great deal to reassure Ruth. However, on Saturday 28 November 1992 Ruth's membranes ruptured at 29 weeks' pregnant. She arrived at Hinchingbrooke at midday and saw the midwife, who recorded the baby's heartbeat. It appeared that all was well. The heartbeat was strong and regular and there was no sign of abnormality.

Mr. Hare was on holiday. The on-duty consultant was Mr. Al Kurdi, who has rather different professional views from Mr. Hare. In view of what she had been promised by Mr. Hare, Ruth was stunned and upset when Mr. Al Kurdi told her that in his view a genital wart virus was the cause of the premature rupture of the membranes. I believe that, although that was Mr. Al Kurdi's professional judgment, there was no evidence that Ruth had a genital wart virus and no scientific evidence that the virus causes premature rupture of the membranes. Mr. Hare later agreed that there is no research to suggest that, and that Mr. Al Kurdi's insistence obscured his judgment. He ignored the existing hospital guidelines and Mr. Hare's own care plan, which stated clearly that Ruth would be given antibiotics if she was admitted early.

Mr. Al Kurdi refused to consider either delivery or antibiotic treatment. Dr. Miles, Hinchingbrooke's consultant paediatrician, later agreed that, if antibiotics had been prescribed, the baby would have had a better chance of survival. No swab was taken to check for infection despite the fact that a one-hour swab test is available to detect this particular group B streptococcus bacterium and that that was later said to be the normal practice. Mr. Al Kurdi said that he did not feel that it was necessary.

Ruth was given a steroid injection at about 2 o'clock. Mr. Hare later commented that that was reckless without antibiotics. Ruth was then admitted to the Hazel ward. That is the ante-natal ward, not the labour ward, which suggested to staff, according to Mr. Hare, that Ruth was not high risk. Ruth also asked midwives for antibiotics, but was told that Mr. Al Kurdi had forbidden them for 24 hours. By this time, Ruth was becoming anxious, but, like so many women in that situation, she felt that perhaps the hospital knew best and that she was not best placed to judge. However, many of us who have been through pregnancy and childbirth will understand the turmoil that she must have felt in those crucial few hours.

During the night, Ruth had a loose bowel movement and reported that the baby was moving less actively. However, those signs of labour and foetal distress were ignored by the staff. By 6 am Ruth was getting desperate and asked for the baby's heart to be monitored, which was done at 7 am. It revealed that the heartbeat was slower than usual, but that, too, was ignored.

By that stage, Ruth felt panicky, cold and ill. She checked her sanitary pad and found a green slime, a highly indicative sign of infection. She begged to see Mr. Al Kurdi immediately. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your imagination—how would anyone feel in such circumstances?

At 9 am, Ruth asked for a full cardio-tocograph and, to her distress, the midwife found no heartbeat. Ruth was now desperately cold and hysterical and persistently asking for

Mr. Al Kurdi. She was given four different answers as to where he might be. The senior house officer on duty arrived before Mr. Al Kurdi, but said that he could not do anything as he had not been trained to deal with the ultrasound machine. Mr. Hare later said that it was inappropriate to leave a senior house officer in charge.

At approximately 10.30 am, Mr. Al Kurdi finally arrived, some 21 hours after he had first seen Ruth, leaving her without any medical care. He looked at the baby on the portable ultrasound scanning machine—there was no heartbeat and the baby was motionless. Mr. Al Kurdi claimed that the screen was too small to see what was going on and that he would do another scan the following day. Ruth and her partner were outraged and the midwife burst into tears, at which point Mr. Al Kurdi admitted that it was highly likely that the baby was dead.

Mr. Al Kurdi then made a number of extraordinary suggestions. The first was that Ruth must have bled at some time in early pregnancy but concealed the fact. When a baby dies in such circumstances, it is almost inevitable that the mother will feel guilty and feel that she is to blame, so the effect of that suggestion on Ruth was extremely distressing. The suggestion was also untrue.

Mr. Al Kurdi then suggested that the cord had prolapsed. He denied that infection could have caused early death and claimed that at 29 weeks the baby would probably not have survived anyway. These points were later said to be false by Mr. Hare. He also said that in Ruth's case his established treatment plan should have been carried out by another consultant.

I have outlined the clinical incompetence in this case and the tragedy to which it led; I shall now describe the mistakes made at the hospital after the stillbirth of Ruth's second baby. Ruth was in a very distressed state, but she made an initial complaint and subsequently sent a letter, neither of which was acknowledged immediately. After the post mortem, Mr. Hare wrote to Ruth giving her a late and inaccurate notification of a placental chromosomal anomaly, for which he later apologised. I do not usually subscribe to conspiracy theories, but, if I were trying to dissuade a mother in those circumstances from continuing with her complaint, that would be a highly effective way of doing so—trying to put the blame on the woman and on some congenital abnormality.

On 26 January Ruth wrote to Mrs. Wells Johnson, the nursing director at Hinchingbrooke, asking for a full investigation, and action to prevent similar events from occurring. Mrs. Wells Johnson responded by suggesting that the baby's death was due to a prolapsed cord. That was not true, and again, she later apologised for saying it.

Two weeks after her daughter's death Ruth telephoned Mrs. Pat Ingham, the midwife who had been counselling her for anxiety during the pregnancy. Pat Ingham said that she could not speak to Ruth, but she telephoned Mr. Hare, who in turn telephoned Ruth's general practitioner. The GP visited Ruth and told her not to contact Pat Ingham again because whistleblowing in the NHS was risky, and she could lose her job for speaking to Ruth.

The stress on whistleblowing is significant, because that is one of the reasons why no full and accurate investigation of what happened is taking place. There is much nervousness about the case, and I believe that the people who know the truth are afraid to speak out.

Ruth's solicitor then wrote to Mr. Morris, the Huntingdon coroner, asking for an inquest. It was to be the first inquest held in Huntingdon to investigate a stillbirth. Mr. Al Kurdi stated under oath that the baby may not have been normal. Mr. Hare agreed later that that was clinically irrelevant. Mr. Al Kurdi also said that prescribing antibiotics would have raised false hopes about the baby's survival. He also stated that he could not consider delivery, because of the low survival rate in the Hinchingbrooke special care baby unit. That was also later denied by the hospital. Mr. Al Kurdi claimed that a swab had not been taken because of a misunderstanding. The hospital pathologist who conducted the post mortem confirmed that the baby was normal, and that death had been caused by overwhelming streptococcus B infection.

During the inquest, what was most distressing to Ruth was the fact that, after Mr. Al Kurdi finished his evidence, the Hinchingbrooke nursing director, Mrs. Wells Johnson, put her arms round his shoulder and said, "Well done." After the inaccurate statements that Ruth believed had been made at the inquest, that was highly distressing. The other important aspect of the case that it is important to mention is Ruth's belief that Mr. Al Kurdi misled the coroner under oath, and had also placed a misleading entry in the case notes, suggesting that he had seen her much earlier than he did.

Following the inquest, also at Ruth's insistence, a meeting was held attended by Ruth, Mr. Hare, Dr. Miles, the Hinchingbrooke paediatrician, Christabel Mulvey, the Cambridge community health council representative, and Mrs. Wells Johnson. All Ruth's complaints were noted in the minutes, and afterwards Mrs. Wells Johnson wrote to Ruth confirming that changes to the unit discussed at the meeting would be carried out. However, Ruth had been promised that on a previous occasion, and in view of her previous experiences and of the occurrences at the inquest, she was not satisfied that a full and impartial investigation had been carried out, or that any disciplinary action was contemplated.

On 1 April, Ruth met Mr. Willis, the chief executive at Hinchingbrooke, and Dr. Henderson, the medical director, and told them her view. Also on 1 April, there was an incident at Hinchingbrooke which led to Mr. Al Kurdi being accused of indecent assault against another patient and he was suspended from all duties. On 5 April, I wrote to the chief executive of Cambridge district health authority outlining the case and asking for an investigation.

Ruth was advised by the district health authority that disciplinary action would not be taken and she was told that an annexe B disciplinary investigation was considered appropriate. The person she saw at the district health authority dictated a letter for her to write requesting such action. An annexe B disciplinary investigation is reserved for very serious complaints. The Cambridge district health authority obviously believed that this was a very serious complaint and it supported Ruth in her action to get some effective disciplinary investigation.

However, Dr. Henderson then wrote to Ruth proposing to initiate an annexe E inquiry. This is an internal disciplinary investigation for less serious offences. Ruth was concerned that her case was not considered serious enough for an annexe B inquiry, despite the advice from the Cambridge district health authority, the purchaser in the case.

As Hinchingbrooke is now a trust hospital, the decision on which line of inquiry to follow was no longer in the hands of the director of public health; it was up to the individual hospital concerned. On 1 June, Ruth had a meeting with Dr. O'Brien, the regional director of public

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

health, who stated that, if Mr. Al Kurdi was acquitted of indecent assault charges, he should return to the hospital to face an annexe B inquiry. He wrote to Hinchingbrooke recommending that, and he also wrote to the Department of Health deploring its outdated circulars which predated the health service reforms.

The outdated circulars referred to complaints procedures and we feel that that was one reason why Hinchingbrooke had not taken effective action in the case. Ruth then received a letter from Mr. Willis stating that it had now been decided that an annexe B disciplinary action should be proceeded with, but that because of the time scale needed to gather medical evidence, it seemed logical that Mr. Al Kurdi's case should cover Ruth's case and that of the complainant in the court case.

In June 1993, Ruth received a letter from Mr. Willis —a situation report—in which he said:

"We have therefore recommended that action as laid down in Annexe B should be initiated and our Chairman has decided to proceed. We are therefore at the stage described in paragraphs 6 and 17a of Annexe B. The Chairman will be writing to Mr. Al Kurdi to inform him that he considers on the evidence presented so far that a prima facie case exists which must be answered . . . It therefore seems logical and is the opinion offered by our legal adviser and agreed by Dr. O'Brien that the disciplinary proceedings in Mr. Al Kurdi's case should cover both your case and that of the complainant in the court case."

Mr. Willis also said that the unofficial estimate by Howard Weston, the hospital's solicitors, of the cost of an annexe B procedure was that it would be a minimum of £100,000 and was more likely to approach £200,000. That point is also significant. The fact that the cost would fall on a small trust hospital is a point that the hospital would find very significant. Without a separate budget for disciplinary proceedings and complaints, it was almost inevitable that the hospital should weigh the cost carefully in deciding whether to continue along that line of complaint. Mr. Willis went on to say, confirming my worst fears and Ruth's worst fears:

"It would be irresponsible of us to commit too much expenditure, in view of the peculiar circumstances of the case and when, as you know, we have no budget to pay for it."

In January this year, at a meeting held at the regional health authority with Mr. Willis, Dr. Henderson, Christabel Mulvey and the new regional director of public health, Dr. Pat Troop, it was confirmed to Ruth that an annexe B inquiry would be held if Mr. Al Kurdi was acquitted and that, if he was found guilty, he would be summarily dismissed and the case would be referred to the General Medical Council. It is also agreed that he will remain suspended until the annexe B inquiry can take place. However, the hospital is most concerned about its public relations. Following Mr. Al Kurdi's acquittal, the hospital announced that it is delighted with the verdict and Mr. Al Kurdi can now return to work. That is in direct contradiction to everything that Ruth was previously told.

Following the dismantling of the annexe B inquiry, Ruth was offered a stage 3 complaint professional review which was undertaken on 27 May. The consultants verbally upheld Ruth's complaint and expressed fears about the safety of the unit. However, their formal report is brief—it has only one and a quarter pages. I have a copy here. The consultants did not even comment on the issue of misleading the coroner or the false entry in the case notes, and none of their serious verbal comments is recorded. I quote from the conclusions of the inquiry:

"Mr. Al-Kurdi's management of Mrs. McCall on her admission to the labour ward on 28 November followed accepted lines of treatment but was at variance to the care plan she agreed with Mr. Hare.

We feel that having a care plan agreed between Mr. Hare and Mrs. McCall, it would have been wiser to have followed that agreement rather than departed from it.

We feel that the situation around the time of the death of Mrs. McCall's baby could have been handled more tactfully by Mr. Al-Kurdi."

That is a disgrace and is not fit to be called an investigation or an inquiry.

Christabel Mulvey of the community health council wrote to the regional director of public health to complain about that, and to ask whether the consultants concerned had been reported elsewhere. She has not yet received a reply to her letter. I understand that an annexe E inquiry, which is for less serious complaints, is still being proceeded with, but I must ask whether that is an appropriate response to Ruth's complaint.

There are many points of general concern about this case. The first point—I hope that the Minister will respond to this; it is perhaps one of the easiest points to respond to —is the Department of Health's circular relating to disciplinary action which has not been updated to take into account the NHS changes. We assume that the role of the director of public health is to be taken by the medical directors of the individual trusts. However, it is obvious that the circular needs to be updated as a matter of urgency.

To make my next point, I shall quote from an article by Liam J. Donaldson in the *British Medical Journal* on 14 May 1994. I quote first from the abstract. He said:

"Existing procedures for hospital doctors within the NHS are inadequate to deal with serious problems. Dealing with such problems requires experience, objectivity and a willingness to tolerate unpleasantness and criticism. Because most consultants' contracts are now held by the NHS trust hospitals, however, those who have developed skill over the years in handling these complex issues are now no longer involved."

He went on to say:

"I fear for the position of NHS trust medical directors. They are taking on this work for the first time but they will be dealing with their peers who work in the same institution. They will not be at an appropriate distance to sustain objectivity as were their predecessors, the regional Health Authority Medical Officers and Chair People."

That is something which has arisen as a result of the NHS reforms. It is a serious point, which I hope the Minister will deal with later. As the regional health authority is no longer involved, there is no supervision or monitoring of the handling of disciplinary actions by individual trusts.

The annexe B disciplinary procedure for serious matters is thorough and legalistic. The estimated cost by Hinchingbrooke of between £100,000 and £200,000 is probably accurate, but it has no funds to pay for the actions. Therefore decisions invariably have to be partly financial. I am sure that when the costs were borne by the regional health authority at least the risk was spread over many hospitals and budgets could bear that more easily.

Disciplinary procedures are obviously an employer-employee matter, yet Ruth was informed that annexe B was also to provide some response to her complaint. The citizens charter outlines the expectations that patients should reasonably have. In Ruth's case, however, there was neither a named carer nor a timely response to the complaint. When NHS trust hospitals fail to meet the standards of the citizen's charter there is no one to monitor any trust's adherence to the principles.

Cambridge health authority advised Ruth that an annexe B action was appropriate and one of its staff even dictated the letter that she wrote to request such action subsequently. In a letter of 3 June, Cambridge health authority described that as "informed advice".

Despite the early view of the Cambridge health authority and the regional director of public health that the very expensive and formal annexe B was the most appropriate mechanism for dealing with this serious case, it is now Hinchingbrooke's sole decision as to what action to take and, apparently, to change its mind as it sees fit.

I do not consider it appropriate that it should be the trust itself that should take the decision about how it investigates complaints against it. Stephen Thornton, the chief executive of the district health authority in Cambridge, wrote to me on 3 June and said:

"it is for the Trust to find the resources to carry out investigations into complaints and to operate disciplinary procedures. Like any other element of their cost, this ultimately finds its way into the prices charged by the purchasers."

It is obvious that price has been an important element in investigating this complaint.

Complaints procedures and disciplinary procedures are currently under review. "Being Heard", which was published in May 1994, is a report of a review committee on NHS complaints procedures. Christabel Mulvey, of the community health council, wrote to the regional health authority saying:

"I hope you share my concern about this report. For such a serious complaint to be dismissed in this manner is disgraceful. I also hope that you will be commenting to the Wilson Committee on the ineffectual nature of the Stage III complaints procedure and that something better must replace it."

I endorse that view totally. I hope that the Wilson committee will consider that serious complaint as part of its deliberations.

This is a serious complaint, but the issues have not been properly addressed for several reasons. First, the inexperience of the medical director of the trust, who is now taking the role previously played by the district or regional health authority, has been a factor. Secondly, Hinchingbrooke does not have a spare £100,000 to £200,000 to spend on mounting disciplinary actions and there is no separate budget for complaints. Thirdly, since the trust is now a business and needs to maximise its profit, any bad publicity will lead to fears of withdrawal of funds. Fourthly, clinical incompetence, if it is proved, may lead to litigation and even more expense for the hospital.

At no point has my constituent, Ruth McCall, sought financial compensation for the distress she has suffered. Her sole reason for pursuing the case is to ensure that other women and babies do not suffer as she did.

I began my speech by declaring that Hinchingbrooke is an important part of the provision of maternity services for women in my constituency. Confidence, however, needs to be restored. It is not restored by an internal disciplinary procedure that is a cover-up and a whitewash. Apart from the need to restore confidence, I hope that the hospital will consider some structural changes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) has compiled figures from answers to a number of parliamentary questions about the numbers of managers and health-care staff in each district health authority. It emerged from his careful and perceptive analysis that Huntingdon health authority had the highest ratio of managers to health-care staff of any health authority. I suggest that more money spent on direct health care and less on managers might have had a beneficial effect in the case that I have outlined.

Despite a disproportionately large number of managers there has been a singular failure to deal properly with a complaint. I shall quote the words of my constituent when summing up her experiences in a letter to the DHA on 7 July. She wrote:

"I am not exaggerating when I say that the business of pursuing this complaint has been as distressing as the death of my babies and has left me exhausted, disheartened and truly despairing."

I have brought the matter to the Floor of the House because of the impossibility of getting the issues properly debated elsewhere. I hope that there will now be a full and proper annexe B inquiry and that the Minister will give me his full support.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on being successful in the ballot and securing the debate. I am glad to take the opportunity to respond to her concerns about maternity services at Hinchingbrooke hospital, and especially about the case of Mrs. Ruth McCall.

As the hon. Lady is aware, the Hinchingbrooke hospital is a modern district general hospital. It has about 400 beds and provides the people of Huntingdon and of the surrounding area with a wide range of excellent in-patient and out-patient facilities and day-care services. It opened in 1983 and has quickly established a reputation as one of the best medium-sized general hospitals in the country.

The hon. Lady remarked on several occasions about the way in which the hospital is run. In particular, she said that it is run for profits. There are no such things as profits in the national health service. Hospitals have to try to balance their budgets against the resources that are made available to them through contracts with health authorities by providing as efficient a service as possible and by signing new or larger contracts with health authorities. There is no question of profit, and it gives something of a misleading impression of the motivations within hospitals to say otherwise.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Is it not true that a hospital must balance its books, and that unexpected costs of the sort outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) in dealing with a disciplinary case could severely disrupt the process of balancing books and, therefore, distort the situation that she has outlined?

Mr. Sackville: That would be true of any enterprise in the public sector. There must be budgets for every part of the NHS. If unexpected costs fall on a certain hospital, those who are in charge of its finances must make provision through arrangements with health authorities or by meeting the costs within existing budgets. I am questioning the use of the word "profit" because of the impression it gives about the way in which a hospital is run and the motivation of those who run it. NHS hospitals are run for patients, not for profits. That may mean finding additional resources to treat more patients, but it does not mean that hospitals have a profit motive, which implies some sort of personal gain.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: How many trust hospitals set aside money for contingencies such as complaints and

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

disciplinary procedures? For example, how many hospitals would set aside a sum as large as £200,000 to investigate a serious complaint?

Mr. Sackville: I cannot answer those questions specifically, but hospitals must be aware that unexpected costs can arise, often as a result of a particular patient's expensive treatment. That possibility must be taken into account in setting a hospital's financial arrangements.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): When the business plans for this hospital and others go to the Department of Health, does the Department scrutinise the budgets to ensure that they are properly planned and can meet all eventualities, including the possibility of disciplinary action? If not, why does not the Department do so, given that it is not prepared to pick up the bill for such action?

Mr. Sackville: If the Department of Health was to sit in the centre trying to second-guess all the budgetary arrangements that have been made, we would need a large number of civil servants. We have regional outposts where our officials inspect all the trusts' annual budgets. That process is part of our monitoring of hospitals so that we know in good time whether a hospital is running into financial difficulties. If we do not know that in advance, patients will suffer.

The obstetrics and neo-natal paediatrics departments were two of the first to be opened at the Hinchingbrooke hospital. As it was a new hospital, there was scope for innovation and organisation of its staffing structure. The most significant of those innovations was to provide medical care on a two-tier rather than a three-tier system. For maternity, that means that care is given by trained doctors rather than doctors in training and the role of midwives is enhanced. So long as a woman's labour is normal and requires minor or common intervention, care is generally given by midwives. Enhancing the role of midwives is one of the fundamental aims of the "Changing Childbirth" paper, which I shall mention more fully in a moment.

Over the past 10 years, the maternity unit at Hinchingbrooke has become justifiably popular with expectant parents. The hospital was originally set up to cater for the needs of people living within the Huntingdon health district, which produces about 1,800 births a year. The current rate at Hinchingbrooke is some 2,700, which shows that many women go there from other districts, partly because of the maternity unit's reputation.

Hinchingbrooke is justifiably proud of its neo-natal services. I noted the hon. Lady's attempt to dispose in advance of any good results achieved by the maternity unit. May I point out that the overall survival rate is among the best in the country. All consultants in obstetrics and neo-natal paediatrics are highly trained in neo-natal intensive care and provide a first-class and much appreciated local service.

The hon. Lady initiated the debate obviously as a result of wishing to mention the on-going complaint concerning Mrs. McCall, who was receiving maternity care at the hospital, which resulted in the tragic events of 1992. I take the opportunity to convey my sympathy to Mrs. McCall and her family. I can only guess how she suffered then, and no doubt is suffering from the immense sadness of her loss.

Hinchingbrooke is, as the hon. Lady said, in the process of conducting an inquiry into that matter. There has been a delay in completing that task, which was partly the result of the police investigation, to which the hon. Lady referred, into a separate and unrelated incident as regards which I understand that the consultant in question has been cleared.

The allegation is that the delivery of the child in November 1992 was clinically mismanaged in the way that the hon. Lady described. That has been the subject of an independent review. The conclusions of that review, as she said, were that the consultant's management of the care was along accepted lines of treatment, but at variance with the care plan that had been agreed with the consultant originally in charge of the case, who was on holiday at the time. The assessors said that it would have been wiser to have followed that plan, and that the handling of the situation at the time of the tragic incident could have been better.

I understand that Mrs. McCall has further anxieties and questions arising from that review, and those are currently being investigated in disciplinary proceedings under annexe E. I would, however, point out that the review is following the guidelines set out by the circular, and will be conducted by independent professional assessors. I can assure the hon. Lady that Hinchingbrooke has already introduced revised protocols and guidance to staff dealing—

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Can the Minister confirm that an annexe E procedure is an internal disciplinary procedure, which is normally used for less serious complaints, and that the annexe B procedure is used for more serious complaints? Does he feel that the specific case that I have outlined would be less serious?

Mr. Sackville: I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that that inquiry is on-going, and I cannot make any comments about the decisions taken by the hospital in that case. I can only tell the hon. Lady that it will be examined by independent assessors, and that I have no doubt that a very fair assessment will be made of the case.

Hinchingbrooke has already introduced revised protocols and guidance to staff dealing with maternity cases to ensure that agreed care plans are followed, irrespective of the consultant in charge at the birth.

Mrs. Campbell: I challenge the Minister on his use of the words "independent assessors", because I understand that an annexe E procedure is an internal disciplinary procedure, and would be carried out by the trust hospital itself. It would not be subject to independent assessment in the same way that annexe B would be.

Mr. Sackville: The review followed the guidelines set out, conducted by independent professional assessors. The hospital will respond to any lessons that are learned from that unfortunate incident.

Much is made of the large number of complaints in the NHS, and many people suggest that that is something that we would want to hide—the contrary is true. Let me put the general matter of complaints into perspective. Last year 55,000 complaints were received out of a total of 45 million in-patient and out-patient treatments. That represents about 0.1 per cent. of patients expressing some degree of dissatisfaction. That is clearly an impressively high level of general satisfaction with NHS services.

We are, of course, striving to do better and we have two key goals in mind: to improve the handling of complaints and reports from the health service ombudsman that are sent to all NHS providers in order to give clear lessons, and to ensure that the NHS complaints procedures are as simple and speedy as possible, and fair to patients and staff. To that end, the Government are currently consulting the independent review committee on complaints under Professor Wilson.

There is clear evidence that there is dissatisfaction with the complaints procedures in the NHS—we would be the first to admit that. Although the present system has the support of parts of the profession, there have been criticisms of the clinical complaints procedure—on the lack of a lay element and the delays in arrangements. Those concerns were expressed to the review committee under Professor Wilson. Its recently published report recommends that clinical complaints should be able to be considered by panels with a lay majority, that there should be an overall deadline of three months for all stages of NHS procedures to be completed, that the health service ombudsman should have the substance of clinical complaints—

Mrs. Anne Campbell: I want to take up the point that the complaints procedures should be heard within three months. Is the Minister aware that my constituent has now been waiting 20 months for a response to her complaint?

Mr. Sackville: That is entirely unsatisfactory. We need to have a system in the NHS that not only deals with complaints promptly, but does so in a way that gives the maximum confidence to all those involved that the complaint is being properly handled.

As I was saying, the third aspect of the Wilson report is that the health service ombudsman should have the substance of clinical complaints brought within his jurisdiction. Currently he may consider only possible maladministration of the procedure. My ministerial colleagues have said that a decision will be forthcoming later in the year on what changes should be made to the current clinical complaints procedure. The consultation period on the Wilson report will end on 15 August.

I certainly hear what the hon. Lady says when she quotes Mrs. McCall on the subject of making and trying to take forward the complaint, which has been extremely distressing for her—I understood her to say that the process was as distressing even as the incidents that lay behind it. I am aware that a great many improvements need to be made to the complaints system in the NHS and I am confident that the outcome of the—

Mrs. Wise: As a member of the Select Committee on Health, I visited the Hinchingbrooke hospital in 1991. I am disquietened and disturbed by the account that we have had today. The Hinchingbrooke was an important hospital that was looked on with great favour by the Select Committee. It seems that the position of the staff and the mothers dependent on the Hinchingbrooke has been altered in a detrimental way.

I have listened carefully to the Minister, but the point which he has not answered and which must be of great concern to all of us who want good care, especially good maternity care, is what the Government will do about the financial aspects of these matters. We think that the financial aspects have, over the course of time, become dominant, but the Minister has not dealt with them. It is not simply a matter of improving the complaints procedure; the funding should not be a matter for individual hospital trusts. What do the Government have in mind on that point?

Mr. Sackville: We have to ensure that a system is established that does not involve a conflict between the financial needs of the hospital and the need adequately to investigate complaints. Professor Wilson has made a number of suggestions on that—for example, the use of lay assessors. If the hon. Lady is saying that the entire complaints procedure should become some form of national commission and should be centrally funded, that would be a major step, and not something to which I could commit the Government.

Ms Primarolo: Does the Minister agree that the case as outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) shows that patients' wishes and the openness of the national health service are not being honoured? Justice has not been done, and has not been seen to be done. The stumbling block appears to be the conflict between commerciality and the lack of funds.

Will the Minister take on board the specific problem of lack of funds for a disciplinary procedure in hospitals? Will he ensure that such a case never happens again in any other hospital? Will he further ensure that the case raised is dealt with correctly and that the proper procedures are undertaken?

Mr. Sackville: I do not accept that a case has been proved that the complaint was handled unsatisfactorily because of a lack of funds. I have already conceded that we must establish a procedure that does not involve a conflict of interests that will inhibit the investigation of complaints.

I end by reiterating my sympathy for Mrs. McCall and her family. I am sorry that I cannot say more in detail about the case because there is a continuing investigation. I share the concern which has been expressed about the case.

Cyprus

10.2 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who is temporarily out of the Chamber, on his return to the Foreign Office—and, indeed, his return to the Chamber. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to our right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, so he will obviously approach his new portfolio with great interest and experience.

This is a sad day in the history of Cyprus. It is the 20th anniversary of the Turkish invasion in 1974 when, at the dead of night, thousands of Turkish troops parachuted from the skies. That resulted in the partitioning of the island and in hundreds of thousands of Cypriots becoming refugees. Many people lost homes that had been in their families for generations.

I well remember that on one of my earlier visits to Cyprus I met a Cypriot who worked for the Cypriot Government. He said, "We took slightly longer before we fled because my father thought he should take the title deeds to our home as well." Then he added, "And much good it did him and us," because ever since then they have not been able to return to their home.

Last autumn I went to Cyprus with my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) and for Basildon (Mr. Amess). One of the most traumatic occasions that we experienced was when we went with the mayor in exile of Famagusta to see from the border the home in which he had lived and from which he was now barred. It must be frightful for tens of thousands of people to go to that border, to see the homes where they once lived, and which are still their legal property, but to know that they are inhabited by Turkish settlers or soldiers and certainly by people who pay no rent for the homes that were once theirs and in the care of which they have no say. Many tens of thousands of people who fled from Famagusta and Kyrenia are in that dreadful position. There can be few greater denials of human rights than for an individual to be prevented from living in the home that his father, grandfather and great grandfather have also been pleased to call home.

It is not just a question of refugees. As a result of the events of 20 years ago, more than 1,500 people are missing whose fate is unknown. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and I—accompanied by, among others, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) —were in Trafalgar square on Sunday. It is probably the last time that I shall appear on the same platform as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, certainly in Trafalgar square.

Among those in the audience were a number of ladies who were dressed all in black because they did not know what had happened to their missing relatives. They could be wives uncertain of the fate of their husbands, mothers not knowing what had happened to their sons and daughters, or men and women who did not know what had happened to their parents. It is a scandal that 20 years later thousands of individuals still do not know what has happened to their dear ones. There are 200,000 refugees, thousands of people do not know what has happened to those whom they hold dearest, and 38 per cent. of the island is inhabited by Turkish Cypriots—although they comprise only 18 per cent. of the population.

To justify the situation in number terms, about 25,000 Turkish settlers have been introduced into Cyprus—not Cypriots, but Turks—and to demonstrate the Government's popularity there are 30,000 Turkish troops. What an advertisement that is of the popularity of Mr. Denktash that he can keep control only by having 30,000 troops from a foreign country in Cyprus. That shows that the so-called independent state of northern Cyprus has no popular support. It is surely wrong that Cyprus should have been repopulated by 25,000 Turkish settlers who are inhabiting homes which are not theirs and which are probably owned by Greek Cypriots who may be able to see their houses but who cannot live in them.

The events of 20 years ago are also a black period in Britain's history. It is one of the ironies of the 1970s and the 1980s that in 1981 my right hon. Friend Baroness Thatcher was able to send a task force to the Falklands to recover those islands from the Argentinian invader while in 1974 the noble Lord Wilson had British troops on British sovereign bases in Cyprus but did nothing to stop Turkish troops landing. He did nothing to use our position as a guarantor power to stop Turkish troops invading Cyprus. That history of neglect is a crying indictment of British politics in 1974.

The real tragedy of the past 20 years is that there is now a real danger that partition will become institutionalised. The blue line in Nicosia is as effective a barrier to movement between the two parts of Cyprus as the Berlin wall was in preventing movement between the two parts of Germany. Before 1974, Greek and Turkish Cypriots lived in the same villages, used the same shops, worked for the same employers and attended the same schools. They may have had differences of religion, but first and foremost they were Cypriots.

Since 1974, Greek and Turkish Cypriots have not spoken to one another, attended the same schools or used the same shops. A whole generation has grown up in which Turk is divided from Greek, Greek from Turk. There is always a risk that the partition which has endured 20 years may eventually be accepted as inevitable by some commentators on the Cypriot issue. One reason for this debate is to emphasise to the people of Cyprus that partition is as unacceptable today, 20 years on, as it was in 1974.

Since an Adjournment debate on the issue in May, on 6 July the European Court banned European Union states importing goods from northern Cyprus unless they were certified by the legal Government of Cyprus. That decision strengthens the possibility of an economic stranglehold on northern Cyprus. There are already huge disparities in the incomes of those who live in northern Cyprus and Greek Cypriots. That will obviously worsen. The northern Cyprus economy survives only because of subventions from Turkey, which itself is scarcely a wealthy economy, and the burden of making greater subventions to northern Cyprus may act as an incentive for Turkey to go to the negotiating table.

Apart from its economic impact, the ban emphasises the unacceptability of partition to national opinion. Peace in the middle east was achieved by a series of building blocks, and so it will be in Cyprus. The United Nations Secretary-General was right to introduce a series of confidence-building measures, based on the Turkish Cypriots allowing the Greek Cypriots back into Varosha and on the re-opening of Nicosia airport. Since 1974, Varosha—once the mecca of the Cypriot tourist trade—has

been closed to all but rats and other vermin. No tourist, hotelier or anybody else has been in Varosha for 20 years. Reopening Varosha would have been a practical start to rebuilding confidence between the two communities. It would have boosted the economies of Cyprus, led to job opportunities for Turkish Cypriots and thus helped both communities. Reopening Nicosia airport would have given a great boost to the Turkish Cypriots, because it would have made imports easier and exports more feasible and given the tourist industry a boost.

The fact that the confidence-building measures, which would reduce disparities in incomes between the Greek Cypriots and others, have not been supported by the Turkish Cypriots must be due simply to sheer stubborn stupidity. President Clerides has agreed to those measures, but Mr. Denktash has been less than consistent and one must wonder whether he ever wants reach a negotiated agreement.

The second issue that one must raise is the Corfu summit, because it was agreed there that the applications of Malta and Cyprus should be the next to be considered by the European Commission. I believe that it would be wrong to link Cyprus's application to a satisfactory solution to its political situation, because in effect if we say to the legitimate Government of Cyprus, "We will consider your application only if there has been an agreement between the two communities in Cyprus," we are giving Mr. Denktash a right of veto over the application of the Greek Cypriots to join the European Community.

There is only one legitimate Government in Cyprus, and it is essential that the European Community should listen to them and to no one else. Cyprus has wanted to get closer to the European Union for many years and I believe that there should be no further delay in considering its application. It was agreed at Corfu that the European Union would consider that application in January next year. I know that Commissioner Brittan is anxious that it should be considered favourably, and I very much hope that it can be.

We should also make it clear to Turkey that its application to join the European Union will be accepted only when a fundamental precondition has been reached —that is, a solution to the Cypriot situation—because for Turkey to be able to colonise a country that is seeking to join the European Union and then say, "We want to join as well," is quite wrong.

The events of 20 July 1974 were unacceptable then and their legacy is even more unacceptable today. A whole generation of Cypriots have suffered because of the world's indifference to their situation in 1974. The world must not be blind to the continued difficulties of Cyprus and to the unacceptable consequences of the continued division of that beautiful island.

10.17 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing the Adjournment debate on this very important topic. He rightly referred to the rally in Trafalgar square, and if I may say so it was a pleasure to see him there accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It was a sight for sore eyes. I am sure that many photographs were taken of the occasion, which could be shown to other hon. Members.

But on a more serious point, as the hon. Gentleman said, the rally, which I have attended on numerous other occasions, was perhaps one of the largest that there has been on the issue. It was attended by a number of people from the Cypriot community in Britain, and in the front, as the hon. Gentleman said, were a number of women who had come specially. They were dressed in black to symbolise the missing people.

There are many examples—with grave consequences internationally—of people who die in the tragic circumstances of war and civil war. But not to know—and still not know 20 years later—the whereabouts of one's husband, father, uncle or son is something too awful to contemplate.

A constituent of mine was at the rally on Sunday. She held up a photograph of her loved one. Many other people held up photographs of their loved ones. All that that woman has left of her loved one is a video tape of the "Nine O'Clock News", in which it is announced that nine police officers in her village have been detained by the Turkish invasion forces. That snippet is all that she has of him; nothing has been heard of him for 20 years. He was a young man in the prime of life, a serving police officer. His sister and elderly mother have no news of him whatever.

There is a problem with the reporting of events connected with Cyprus. I saw very little media coverage of that tremendous rally on Sunday, although I was delighted to read a wonderful editorial on the subject in today's *Evening Standard*, which dealt with the continuing international problem with great authority, passion and clarity.

On Sunday, we met in the shadow of South Africa house. Under Mr. Mandela's presidency, that country is now in a position that very few hon. Members on either side of the House expected to see in their lifetimes. South Africa is now being admitted back into the international community. Recently, President Clinton and the German Chancellor crossed, through the Brandenburg gate, into a free and united federal Germany. But Cyprus—a member of the Commonwealth and the United Nations—is still cruelly divided.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House will have visited Cyprus. They will have gone from bustling Nicosia, a wonderful, thriving commercial city, to look at the green line: they will have viewed the divided part of the city, where nothing has moved or breathed for 20 years. It is possible to see the evidence of abandoned car lots and discarded glasses. It comes as quite a shock. I was a student at the time of the invasion; I remember reading about it, but visiting Cyprus and witnessing the desolation is another thing entirely. It really brings home the suffering that is going on.

So many people in Cyprus are refugees in their own land. The Cypriot Government have absorbed their refugees into the community; there are no refugee camps. The Government of Cyprus must be warmly congratulated on what they have done during those years. People forget, however, that many Cypriots are unable to return to their family homes or to visit the graves of their parents and grandparents. Theirs is perhaps the cruellest fate of all: they are refugees in their own country.

One of our difficulties in Britain is that, in many senses, we have lost the connection with land and soil, living as we do in a very industrial society. Although Cyprus, too, is a very modern industrial society, it retains that connection

[Mrs. Barbara Roche]

with the land that was owned by parents and grandparents —small pieces of land, perhaps, but they hold important memories.

Like the hon. Member for Hendon, South, I feel that President Clerides has done all that he can in the current negotiations. I find it striking that the Secretary-General of the United Nations clearly reached the view that Mr. Denktash and the illegal regime in the north of Cyprus were ensuring that the talks stalled and nothing happened.

Britain has a part to play in this. We are and we continue to be a guarantor power. I warmly welcome the Minister to his new post, but I must tell him that it is not good enough for Britain just to say that we support the best efforts of the United Nations. Britain has a part to play in solving this matter, as do the European Community and the United States.

I have asked several parliamentary questions on this issue. I asked about the visits of Foreign Office Ministers. From the answers, I understand that since 1979 Ministers have visited Cyprus only three times to discuss solutions to all the problems on the island. In the short time that he has been in his new post I do not suppose that the Minister has had time to make detailed travel arrangements, but I hope that he will visit Cyprus in the near future so that these matters can be discussed. In one case there was a gap of 10 years between visits. That is not good enough for a guarantor power.

The crucial issue involves the application of Cyprus to join the European Union. Rightly, mention was made of the Corfu summit. However, it is something to talk about it and sign a document there and then to hear Ministers say when they come back that Cyprus's application to join the European Union is dependent upon the problems of the island being solved. That is not good enough. In effect, that is the illegal regime in the north holding the legitimate, democratic Republic of Cyprus hostage. In every way Cyprus fulfils all the criteria to become a member of the Union.

If Cyprus became a member of the European Union, there is no way in which the Union would allow the island to be divided. It is vital that Britain does everything it can to encourage its membership and I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say about that.

There is also the problem of the fires in Famagusta about which I have written to the Foreign Secretary. They swept through the city. We need to know how they came about and what will be the solution. There are many Cypriots in Britain as well as in Cyprus who are anxious about that. I look forward to the Minister's reply.

The people of Cyprus have waited a long time for justice and for a solution. I am glad that the hon. Member for Hendon, South initiated the debate. After 20 years it would be wonderful if Britain could begin to play its part in bringing about a just solution.

10.28 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for initiating the debate and for the long and honourable stance that he has adopted on Cyprus. Hon. Members can say that the issue of Cyprus has been kept alive by the actions of honourable Members from both sides of the House.

Like other colleagues I welcome the presence of the new Foreign Office Minister. No doubt he has an idea about the Cyprus issue, but I must tell him in the friendliest way possible that hon. Members from both sides of the House will take every opportunity to raise the issue of Cyprus. To the credit of hon. Members, that has been our record over 20 years and it is the attitude that we shall continue to adopt until there is an honourable settlement.

Both the previous speakers highlighted some of the tragic issues and, sadly, we must continue to remind people about them. Over the years I and other colleagues have had many meetings with senior Ministers. I and a number of colleagues had many meetings with Sir Geoffrey Howe when he was the Foreign Secretary. To his credit, he always said that, for the life of him, he could not understand why Turkey did not substantially reduce the number of its troops in northern Cyprus. Sadly, that did not happen.

I am a member of the Council of Europe. About three weeks ago, its political committee met in Strasbourg. The rapporteur was Lord Finsberg, who had invited both sides —the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots—to Strasbourg to discuss how they envisaged a settlement being reached. The committee will of course publish a report in due course, and I am sure that the Minister will find it very depressing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green said, President Clerides made very clear his position and that of the Government of Cyprus on the confidence-building measures.

As was stated at the meeting in Strasbourg, Mr. Denktash is—as we say—moving the goalposts all the time. The Secretary-General, fully aware of the problems, outlined clearly what he wished to be discussed. However, it was Mr. Denktash who repeatedly moved the goalposts and made meaningful discussions virtually impossible.

In a debate that I secured in, I think, December last year, a Foreign Office Minister, the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), outlined what the Government would be doing in the following three or four months, which took us into the beginning of the year. I know that Minister's name, but I regret that I do not know his constituency. He said clearly that the Government regarded the confidence-building measures with great hope, but it is Mr. Denktash, helped by the support that he gets from Ankara, who has delayed any meaningful progress on those measures.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green mentioned the rally in Trafalgar square on Sunday. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) thrilled the enormous crowd by delivering his speech in Greek. I also spoke at the rally. It became clear that, after 20 years, the Greek Cypriots desperately want an honourable settlement.

The first problem to confront the Minister when he sits down with the Foreign Secretary and other colleagues is to decide exactly what to do after 20 years. Despite repeated efforts at inter-community talks and despite the confidence-building measures set out by the Secretary-General, we have got nowhere. Now is the time for the Government to state what action is to be taken.

I liken Mr. Denktash to a blackmailer: he realises that, as long as his demands are being met with nothing being done to him, he will continue to make those demands.

Regrettably, that is exactly what Mr. Denktash is doing. It is always Mr. Denktash who demands concessions. I suggest to President Clerides that the time has come for him, as leader of the Greek Cypriots, to make it clear that the concessions are at an end. Mr. Denktash and Ankara must agree that a settlement is needed.

However, in speeches and comments made in the past two or three months, senior Turkish officials have said clearly that they have no intention of withdrawing their troops from northern Cyprus or entering into a meaningful dialogue about a settlement. Mr. Ecevit, the leader of the Democratic party in Turkey, is on record as having said only a few weeks ago that the situation in Cyprus was solved in July 1974; he believes that there is no problem in Cyprus.

I shall not detain the House for very long as I am sure that other hon. Members, let alone members of the two Front Benches, wish to speak. I am the first to admit that the hon. Member for Hendon, South and many of his colleagues have an excellent record of fighting for the rights of Cyprus. I have said many times that I am not interested solely in the Greek Cypriots; I am interested in the people of Cyprus, be they Greek or Turkish, and in the island of Cyprus.

A great injustice was done 20 years ago. I do not know whether the Minister has ever been to Cyprus. Perhaps he has, in another capacity. I hope he takes up the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green that Ministers got into the regular habit of visiting Cyprus. If the Minister went there he would see its enormous potential. The south is extremely wealthy. Sadly, the north is not. However, Cyprus is extremely popular with holidaymakers, and has a superb agricultural system that is extremely profitable to it. If only the island could be united, it would soon have one of the most prosperous economies in the world. Yet that still does not happen.

How would the Minister answer someone who said to him, "Look at my hands. Those are the hands of someone who has worked on the land all his life. That was my job, and it is what I love to do—but my lands were taken away from me and I have never had the opportunity to go back to my lands and my property"? The people of Cyprus cannot be expected to continue put up with and to live with that injustice, as they have for the past 20 years.

Those people are entitled to expect certain basic rights. The first is freedom of movement anywhere in the island of Cyprus. We should make the comparison with this country. What happens in Cyprus is as if people in this country were told, "You cannot go to Scotland or Wales; you can travel only in England." I am sure that all hon. Members would say that in any settlement both Greek and Turkish Cypriots must have the right to go anywhere in the island that they want to.

Equally, we can neither allow the situation to continue in which people have had their lands and properties stolen from them, nor allow a settlement in which those lands and properties are not returned.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South told us, forcefully and rightly, what we need to look for as evidence of good will. I have already described to the Minister the reluctance of Mr. Denktash and his friends in Ankara to accept any reduction in the number of troops in the north. As for good will, if Famagusta-Varosha were reopened, that would provide evidence of meaningful good will on the part of Mr. Denktash. Yet when he has been approached, what has happened?

When the Minister has been in his new post a little longer he will be able to sit down with his officials and look at the map of Famagusta as it was before 1974, and that of the Famagusta that Mr. Denktash now says he is prepared to hand back to the Greek Cypriots. He will see that that deal is just not on. It would not be on in this country, either, if any of us—the Minister, myself or any other hon. Member—were confronted by someone saying, "Oh, yes. Once that was yours, but now I've got it. It doesn't matter how I got it. As evidence of good will, I am prepared to give you one little bit back—but I shall keep the bulk of it." That is what Mr. Denktash says repeatedly about Famagusta. Yet if he was prepared to agree to the opening up of Famagusta, it would be evidence of good will on his part.

Although there are problems, they could be resolved, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations has clearly said in the past few weeks. I am sure that the Minister, although he has just come into this post, is aware that the inquiry that the Secretary-General was asked to hold about Cyprus went on for many months. It is only within recent weeks that, regrettably, the Secretary-General has said that he has got nowhere. The special emissaries whom he sent to Cyprus, including Mr. Joe Clarke, the former Prime Minister of Canada, have all said that they want a settlement. The tragedy is that, on the Turkish Cypriot side, Mr. Denktash does not want a settlement.

As I and many hon. Members have said before, we desperately want a settlement. I serve on the defence committee of Western European Union and I attend defence meetings. The Mediterranean comes more and more into our discussions, as do the possible threat and concern caused by countries in the Mediterranean. The lack of any settlement in Cyprus comes more and more into the discussions. That should be of concern to us.

I hope that the Minister takes up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. When, in the next few months, he goes to Cyprus for a few days and meets people—not only politicians, but ordinary people—he should do as my hon. Friend said. He should walk along the green line and think that this is happening in a Commonwealth country.

We all know what used to happen in Berlin. Visiting politicians always walked along the wall and had their photograph taken there. They used to say, "What a disgrace to democracy that in this day and age, there is a wall that divides a city." In Cyprus, there is a wall that divides a country. People in the north cannot go to the south and people in the south cannot go to the north. We are one of the guarantor powers. Cyprus is a member of the Commonwealth and the heads of the Commonwealth conference met there last September. Within a Commonwealth country is a wall that divides the country in half.

The Minister will find many friends in the House who will do all that we can to work with him and with his colleagues. What we say to the Minister in turn is that, in the next few weeks, he, the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office must tell hon. Members of both sides what the Government propose to do. They must say to Mr. Denktash and his friends and supporters in Ankara, "You cannot continue, year by year by year, to flout any authority that comes here

[Mr. Tom Cox]

to try to develop and to get accepted a settlement that would be as honourable for the Turkish Cypriots as it would be for the Greek Cypriots."

I wish the Minister well in his new position. Many hon. Members held him in high regard in his previous post. He may have taken on an even more difficult post now. However, as I said in my opening remarks, he can be in no doubt that at every opportunity the issue of Cyprus will be raised in the Chamber by hon. Members on both sides who are interested in the subject.

10.43 pm

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I rise to put, dare I say it, a little more balance into the debate. I have listened to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). Just as two languages are talked on the island of Cyprus, it is almost as if two languages are talked in the House of Commons when we consider the issue.

The hon. Member for Tooting made much play of what had happened in the south of Cyprus, and he talked about the events of 20 years ago as if they were the start of the present problem. He knows, and I know, that the difficulties between the two communities go back further than 20 years. He is a regular visitor to Cyprus, so he will have seen the Turkish villages where Turkish Cypriots were murdered by Greek Cypriots. I accept that atrocities may have taken place on both sides.

What was missing from the hon. Gentleman's speech —and what I presume has been missing from the debate as a whole—is some sort of balance between the two communities. Let us take one simple fact: the Turks are a minority, and minorities tend to feel exceedingly nervous when there is a wealthier majority in the same country.

My second point is that, when we talk about a settlement, I must ask the hon. Gentleman and all those who are keen on the Greek Cypriot cause: who has benefited? Who has done well out of the green line and the division of the island? We all know what has happened. We know that the south has developed enormously and is much stronger than the north.

That has happened because the Cypriot Government are recognised by the international community and get the international aid. The problem is that the Turkish Cypriots have felt alone; they have felt that the only people interested in them are those in the Republic of Turkey. I do not think that hon. Members on either side of the House want any settlement forced on either side if it is against the will of the various people.

I make it clear that I do not have an axe to grind. Some of my colleagues may well have Greek Cypriot communities or Turkish Cypriot communities in their constituencies; I have neither. I came to the issue of Cyprus as someone who had no strong feelings in either direction. I became interested as a member, and now an officer, of the parliamentary friends of North Cyprus group because I felt that all the high cards were in the hands of the Greek Cypriots.

If we are to get a proper settlement, we must satisfy the fears of the Turkish Cypriots. We all know that, unless we can satisfy those fears, there is a great danger of the continuing presence of a large number of Turkish troops in the north of the island. Those who are putting forward the case for the Greek Cypriots must understand that fear.

The Turkish troops are seen as the only defenders of the freedom of Turkish Cypriots. We know perfectly well that there are more Greek Cypriots than Turkish Cypriots. We know well that some Greek Cypriots are much wealthier than Turkish Cypriots, with mineral resources. We also know the way in which the Greek Cypriots have built up their forces over the years.

The trouble is that, as this thing has gone on for so long, so much mutual mistrust is buried in the animosities of the past that it becomes difficult to bring about a solution today.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): What sort of role does the hon. Gentleman think the United Nations should play in this problem? I visited Cyprus some time ago. It appeared that the international community had abandoned its responsibility for what was going on there. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that there is a role for the United Nations, at least to intervene on the question of Cyprus to find a solution?

Sir Peter Fry: Yes, I do. One of the great problems is that there have been various UN resolutions. At one time, it seemed that one side or both sides would agree with the resolutions, and they then backed away. That is why we have this continuing problem.

Another reason is that, despite the occasional problems along the green line, it is not like Bosnia; it is not like a country where a war is taking place. Cyprus is a remarkably peaceful country, and people are able to take their holidays in either Greek Cyprus or North Cyprus without fear that they will be shot at or endangered.

In a way, that is part of the problem. As it is something that it is not hitting the headlines, and as it is not seen as an urgent priority compared with some of the difficulties that we see all around the world, perhaps there has not been the urgency for the United Nations to try to get a settlement. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden).

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Other hon. Members have spoken about the role of the guarantor powers. If my hon. Friend casts his mind back to July 1974, he will recall that Mr. Ecevit, representing the Turkish Government, came here and begged the then Government of the United Kingdom to intervene—as we had a right and a duty to do —on behalf of all the Cypriot people.

The then British Government refused because they were craven and cowards. They did not intervene when they should have done. Had they done so, the island would not now be divided, because British troops would have been in Nicosia within 24 hours. There would have been a token Turkish landing, and President Makarios would have been reinstated. I will never, ever forgive—nor, I hope, will my hon. Friend forgive—the then British Government for their behaviour in 1974.

Sir Peter Fry: I endorse my hon. Friend's wise words.

It would be a tragedy, however, if we spent all our time looking back and did not make an attempt to see how we can bring about an eventual solution.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does my hon. Friend agree that we have an obligation to look back, because unless we take history into account we cannot look forward? Does he agree that the problem at that time was that the people of the Turkish community were driven into enclaves, were deprived of their jobs and their civil rights?

Does he agree that they gave a cry for help, to which the British Government of day failed to respond? That is why Turkey came to the rescue.

Sir Peter Fry: My hon. Friend is right. One must recall that this country was the guarantor of the Cyprus constitution. When that constitution appeared to be torn up by one side, it was inevitable that the Turkish Cypriots looked for help. I am afraid that, in their time of need, the Government of this country did not come to their assistance.

If we concentrate on who did what 25 years ago, we will not, however, get any closer to a settlement. If anyone doubts that, I refer him to the problems of Northern Ireland, where we are too obsessed with the past to alter the problems of today.

I refute the description of President Denktash offered by the Opposition. I have had the pleasure of meeting him on a number of occasions. With respect, I must contradict the hon. Member for Tooting, because I believe that Mr. Denktash wants a settlement. He knows that, in the long run, he cannot always rely on the Turkish Government to spend large amounts of money on Turkish north Cyprus. He knows that, in the long run, a population that is much smaller than its Greek neighbours must be offered certain built-in guarantees if long-term security is to established.

He also knows, however, that it is quite ridiculous to say to him and to his country, "You must rebuild Famagusta." The resources, frankly, are not there to do that. People now living in north Cyprus have lost property in south Cyprus, just as people living in southern Cyprus have lost property in north Cyprus. It is not a one-way process.

If hon. Members intend to ask the Minister, whom I congratulate on his appointment, to take a one-sided view, I must tell him and the House that certain hon. Members would not accept that. This is not a party political matter; we are trying to resolve a difficult situation in part of the Commonwealth.

As usual, the recent negotiations and who said what have been shrouded in fog. As I understand it—I am willing to be corrected—two main issues were to be settled and taken as a measure of the trust between the two communities. First, the main airport was to be opened, so that both parts of the island could use it. That is essential for the development of tourism in north and south Cyprus. I accept that that would have brought great benefits to the Turkish Cypriots.

Secondly, Famagusta was to be handed back to Greek Cypriots. I should have thought that that was a fair offer between the two communities. I understand that Mr. Denktash was willing to do a deal. But when he asked the Greek Cypriot Government to put their ideas and acceptance of the proposal on paper, they declined to do so.

I do not want to go into all the whys and wherefores, but it seems that there must be some doubt about who wants a settlement. As the Greek Cypriots hold nearly all the cards, it suits them perfectly well to let the situation continue as it is for a very long time. Their economy is not suffering. Indeed, it is expanding. They are not under the duress that is being experienced in the north. They are not under the same pressure to come to some form of settlement.

When the Government accept that they are a guarantor of the original constitution of Cyprus, I hope that we shall proceed in a more even-handed manner.

Mr. John Marshall: I suggest to my hon. Friend that he reads the report of the Security Council, in which it is made clear that the feeling of those who have been to Cyprus is that it is much more the fault of Mr. Denktash than of President Clerides that there has been no settlement.

Sir Peter Fry: My hon. Friend is entitled to his view, as is anyone who has been to Cyprus from the United Nations. I visited both parts of the island, and it is my feeling that there has been insufficient consideration of the real threats and fears to which the Turkish minority is subjected.

My hon. Friend talks about what the United Nations should or should not do. Is he suggesting—I ask a simple question—that the United Nations should enforce a settlement regardless of the wishes of the Turkish Cypriots? If he says yes, that is a point of view. I should make it clear that it is one with which I violently disagree.

If my hon. Friend says no, and he feels that there must be a settlement between the two communities, we shall get nowhere by bashing one of them over the head and trying to prove that it is entirely wrong. That will only reinforce its fear that it has no friends, and its desire that the Turkish troops should remain. That will mean only that an eventual settlement will be even further away.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman might think, on reflection, that he has done a disservice to the 200,000 Greek Cypriots who have been displaced and are refugees. Surely he accepts that those who were in the southern part of Cyprus wish to return to their homes. To suggest that the people in southern Cyprus, or the southern part of the Republic of Cyprus, do not want a settlement, does them a grave injustice.

Sir Peter Fry: A great many Turkish Cypriots were taken from their land in the south of Cyprus. It is an argument that applies both ways, and I am sympathetic to both groups.

The debate has, unfortunately, been one sided so far. Only one point of view has been expressed. I think that there is another point of view. It would be fatal if the Government or the United Nations continue to take what the Turkish Cypriots believe to be the Greek view. If that attitude continues, the problem will not be solved.

There should be a more even-handed approach. We probably need to persuade Mr. Denktash and his Government to arrive at a settlement. We shall not succeed by bludgeoning them—

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Fry: No. I am sorry, but I am about to bring my remarks to an end.

We shall not succeed if they think that we are not being even handed and that we are biased against them. I think that my intervention has introduced a degree of balance and has focused on the true split of the island—two things which had been missing from the debate.

10.59 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): I regret that there is not enough time to develop many pertinent arguments. My intervention will be brief, but I must take up some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry). He said that we must not look back, but all the rhetoric of those who support the cause of the Turkish Cypriots is based on looking back far beyond

[Mr. Edward O'Hara]

1974. The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) recognised that, and the hon. Member for Wellingborough should acknowledge the fact.

Great store is made of the Turkish army's right to invade Cyprus in 1974, citing the 1960 treaty of guarantee. It had no such right. The treaty of guarantee afforded it the power to intervene to preserve and restore the constitutional order in Cyprus, which was rescued from an aborted coup d'etat soon after the invasion in 1974. But the Turkish army stayed on and, in so doing, was in breach of the treaty of guarantee.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough should recognise that. He is talking the language of "Alice in Wonderland" when he says that the Turkish army was protecting Turkish Cypriots in northern Cyprus. He knows that there has been mass emigration of Turkish Cypriots from northern Cyprus and a mass import of immigrants from Anatolia into northern Cyprus—a classic case of ethnic cleansing and ethnic engineering.

Given the lack of time, I have time only to say that, behind all the rhetoric, the reality is that 20 years of prevarication and pretence of negotiation have been but a cloak for the real purpose of the northern Cyprus Administration, which is internally to gerrymander their electorate so that they have a built-in support from imported votes for their purpose of partition. Externally, they can now tell the outside world with some credibility that the two communities could not live together, because they have unlearnt the habit of living together by force of arms over 20 years.

Thucydides drew a distinction between pretext and causation in power politics, a classic example of which can be seen in the behaviour of the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey since 1974 in Cyprus.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough made great play about the depression of the economy in northern Cyprus. The 200,000 Greeks who were driven out were the economic engine of northern Cyprus, and the Anatolian peasants who have been imported ever since are no economic engine to restore the area's economy. Although only 37 per cent. of the island is occupied, it is potentially by far the most productive part of the island. The Turks took the whole of the tourist industry in 1974—it had to be rebuilt in the south—and the most of the productive agricultural land.

Tacitus once said:

"they make a desert and they call it peace".

Never could that axiom be more clearly applied than to the situation produced by the Turks and Turkish Cypriots in northern Cyprus today.

11.2 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): May I just round up the debate, because I must support my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry)?

I first went to north Cyprus some 10 years ago. I have no brief from either community, Greek or Turkish. Indeed, I have friends on both sides of the divide. This debate must be regarded in the context of balance and, while I congratulate the newly appointed Minister at the Foreign Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), I urge him earnestly to listen to both sides of the equation and visit both sides of the island of Cyprus.

When he visits the north side, he will hear a different story. He will immediately become aware of a community of peaceful people who threaten no one. Not a single life has been lost in conflict since 1974. All they want is that their children can grow up without fear and threats to their lives. The older generation remember keenly the deprivation and lack of civil rights that they went through.

While the Greek community rejoice in their prosperity, they rejoice also in their ability to lobby across the world, and do so extremely effectively. By the same token, it is important to bear in mind the fact that there are people in the north who are not so effective at lobbying, who cannot call up the world diaspora to their support, but who none the less have a strong case.

I urge the Minister to take account of their losses—of their loss of dignity, of the lack of support from Britain, and of how hurtful it has been that, although they regard themselves as a member of the British Commonwealth, they are not accorded the right of being an equal member of the British Commonwealth, in the same light as their colleagues and their friends in the south.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Lady treat of the subject of colonisation of northern Cyprus? There are no Cypriots in my constituency of Hemsworth, but I am considerably worried about the historical precedents that we have of colonisation of that type—indeed, it happened in ancient Greece. Would the hon. Lady like to justify what is happening there? Will she also perhaps reflect on what happened historically when that took place?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am grateful for that intervention. One fact must be borne in mind. If the hon. Gentleman should visit north Cyprus, he will become well aware that the north Cypriot regards himself with great pride as a Cypriot, not a Turk, and he simply regarded the purpose of the arrival of the Turkish army as being to look after his own personal security and his interests.

North Cypriots long for the day when they can be free of the support from Ankara. Ankara came to their support because they were being deprived of their civil rights, and they had been ethnically cleansed. Surely now the day has come when their wishes must be taken into account. I feel strongly that the House tends to forget them.

Mr. O'Hara: Can the hon. Lady give me an example of the ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Cypriots pre-1974?

Lady Olga Maitland: There are endless examples. If the hon. Member looks at any map of Cyprus, he will see that there are circles round places in which only the Turkish Cypriots may live, work and move. I have heard many personal accounts of Turks who have been totally deprived of freedom of movement across the island.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend spoke about ethnic cleansing, and the fact that the Turkish Cypriots regard themselves as Cypriots, not Turkish Cypriots. Will she explain to the House how they feel when they see tens of thousands of Turkish colonists coming from Turkey and living in northern Cyprus? Is that not anathema to them, and to every other Cypriot?

Lady Olga Maitland: When my hon. Friend takes into account the fact that the people who enter from the country of Turkey are simply other citizens, and that, similarly,

many people will have arrived in southern Cyprus from all over the world, I think that, in a sense, that is begging the question.

We are discussing an issue of equality of human rights. The Turkish people of north Cyprus deserve the same amount of attention and concern as the Greek people in the south.

11.8 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on asking for and obtaining this debate. As my hon. Friends and Conservative Members have said, it is significant that today is the twentieth anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey on 20 July 1974, when Turkish troops invaded and occupied just under 40 per cent. of the total land mass.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) rightly said, the occupied area was the most fertile, productive and economically wealthy part of the island, so I completely lost the thread of the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry), who seemed to blame the poverty of northern Cyprus on the industrious people of southern Cyprus who have worked hard to rebuild their economy in some of the most hostile territory of the island. It was a perverse argument to advance.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and for Knowsley, South have advanced many of the arguments and I do not want to repeat them. It is important that all the arguments are rehearsed in such a debate, and it was therefore refreshing to hear the view of the hon. Member for Wellingborough. Some reflective thought, however, might have given him the answers to some of his questions. He claimed that he had much higher motives in saying that he did not have a vested interest and came to the problem free from constituency pressures from Greeks on the one side or Turks on the other. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there are no Greek or Turkish Cypriots in my constituency in the Rhondda.

To the hon. Member for Wellingborough and some of his hon. Friends I would say that we do not have Asil Nadir in our constituencies either.

Lady Olga Maitland: That is a cheap comment.

Mr. Rogers: It is not cheap. If ever a person was supported by and received help from a political party, it was Asil Nadir in his business activities and the way he related to the nexus of politics and trading in the near east. Mine was not a cheap remark: I was saying that many Conservatives had strong connections with Asil Nadir, so they do not come to the problem in a clean state.

Lady Olga Maitland: How would the hon. Gentleman respond to the fact that Serbs from Belgrade and Bosnia used banks in Greek Cyprus to launder their arms-dealing money?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Lady is perhaps an expert on the laundering of money in the middle east—if one can make Bosnia and Croatia a part of that—while I am not particularly expert. The hon. Lady has obviously made a great study of that area.

Mr. Asil Nadir was a fugitive from justice in this country and was entertained and was welcomed back in the illegally occupied part of northern Cyprus. There is no way that the Turkish Government will transport him back to this country. He certainly had a great deal of influence on certain members of the—

Sir Jim Spicer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: If the hon. Gentleman wants to speak, he can follow me in the debate.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough also said that northern Cyprus has no friends while the southern part, the Republic of Cyprus, has all the friends. That is fairly natural—if they are in the right and northern Cyprus and Turkey are in the wrong, naturally the world community will support those people who have suffered an injustice and whose land has been invaded by foreign armies.

Sir Peter Fry: Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that, while the minority Turks feel that their future is threatened and they are not given a degree of security, they will never be very willing to make a long-term settlement? Is that not the element that has been missing from the hon. Gentleman's speech and those of his hon. Friends? There has to be some guarantee. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, unless the Turks receive that guarantee, we may be debating the subject for many more years to come?

Mr. Rogers: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman —in fact, I was going to come to that point. He said that we needed to be even-handed in our approach to the problem. He is right to say that guarantees must be made to both communities. My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting said that his interest was in Cypriots—not Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots. Any solution that is to be brought about by the mediation of the United Nations has to be fair to both communities. That was why President Clerides recently made the offer that if northern Cyprus was prepared to demilitarise its area and Turkey was prepared to withdraw the 30,000 troops, he would disband the national guard. The whole of the island of Cyprus could become demilitarised, with a return to normal policing so that people in each of the communities could feel secure in their homes and properties.

It has been 20 hard years of diplomatic effort towards achieving a settlement. It is my considered opinion—I do not come to the argument from either side—that it is the Turks who have been intransigent in the negotiations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting said, Mr. Denktash seems to be continually moving the goalposts.A study of the detail of the negotiations under the United Nations representative, Mr. Clarke, and an examination of his work over the past 18 months show that, at the end of the day, the difficulty has always been Mr. Denktash.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The Turkish army is supposedly defending human rights, but should we not consider Turkey's own record on human rights in relation to the Kurds or, indeed, even Manchester United supporters?

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend has made his point. I do not want to go down that road because of restrictions on time and the fact that the Minister wants to give as full a reply as possible to the debate.

The Turkish Government have a substantial involvement in the issue. Their transplantation policy constantly creates a position in which it will be more and more difficult to reach a just solution. The hon. Member for

[Mr. Rogers]

Hendon, South was right to say that the northern Cypriots resent the transplantation of mainland Turks, who are disturbing the whole of their cultural pattern. The people from Anatolia may be coming under duress or of their own free will, but they are coming to a foreign country. Cyprus is Cyprus and Turkey is Turkey.

The transplantation of populations is a form of ethnic cleansing—or ethnic engineering, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting said—and it can only confound the possibility of a proper and just settlement. As I have said, some 37 per cent. of the most fertile part of the island is occupied by 18 per cent. of the population. The only way the conflict can be resolved is by international negotiation, but the United Nations is running out of patience and may eventually have to take some draconian decisions to reach a solution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green referred to the possibility of Cyprus joining the European Union. I am a little more optimistic than she was about the British Government's views on that. My understanding is that the former Minister of State at the Foreign Office said that the entry of Cyprus would be part of the next tranche of enlargement. That will trigger some action and there may be some movement to end the stalemate, which can only be of benefit to a problem that has been bogged down for 20 years.

Mr. Denktash has said that if Cyprus joined the EU, he would want to link up with Turkey. Of course, Turkey also has a vested interest in an association with the EU and eventually becoming a member of it. Although it may not be a candidate at the present time, it has a treaty of association with the EU and I am sure that it would not want to lose that. The Turkish Government might not like Mr. Denktash using them as a threat against their possible future in the European Union.

The solution must be even-handed. There are Cypriots, some of Turkish origin and some of Greek origin, but they are all Cypriots. I am quite prepared to accept that there might have been abuses in the past on both sides, but in the future we must try to create a situation that is just and equitable, so that the warm people of Cyprus—whom many of us have met in this country—on both sides of the line can be safe in their homes and the future of their children secure.

11.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on having secured a debate on this important subject on such a significant day for Cyprus. He has a long-standing and understandable interest in Cyprus.

We have heard a number of heartfelt speeches during this debate and I hope that it will be helpful if I set out some of the considerations governing our overall approach to the Cyprus problem and our view of recent developments in the United Nations-sponsored intercommunal talks, our role in support of United Nations efforts and how we see matters developing, and if I try to respond to as many as possible of the points that have been raised. It has been a relatively short debate, but much ground has been covered and I hope that hon. Members will not consider it discourteous if I do not give way because I, too, want to try to cover as much ground as possible.

As has been said, today is the 20th anniversary of the landings in Cyprus by the Turkish military, coming five days after a coup inspired by the then Greek military junta against the Republic of Cyprus. At the time, the United Kingdom Government rightly condemned those events and was instrumental in securing United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for an immediate end to the fighting.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) made poignant reference to the fate of many of those missing as a consequence of those events and our thoughts must be with the relatives of those missing from both communities. The United Nations committee for missing persons, including representatives of both communities, is charged with investigating the fate of those missing. I am afraid that at times one or both communities have not co-operated with the committee's work.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) and others referred to the position with regard to settlers. We have made it clear that we regard their position, and any attempt to upset the demographic balance, unhelpful in attempts to reach a solution and we have said so. We joined other Commonwealth Governments at the Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus in October 1993 in calling for an end to such settlement.

Twenty years on, our thoughts must be with Cypriots of both communities who suffered then and have suffered since. We should think not of those killed and injured and their relatives, but of those who are displaced and have been unable to live in or return to their homes. We should think, too, of those members of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus, including our service men, who have given their lives trying to prevent fighting, of those who have striven since to keep the peace and those who are still there nobly engaged in the peacekeeping task.

Our efforts to help to find a solution to the Cyprus dispute are driven by the wish to avoid a repetition of the events of 1974. Our overriding consideration is that we should support the efforts of the United Nations in terms of both of peacekeeping and of the good offices mission of the United Nations Secretary-General. But our status as a guarantor power means that we aim to complement as well as support Mr. Boutros-Ghali's mission, while observing the primacy of his mandate. In so doing, we seek to assist both communities to find the way forward to an agreement.

Our activity takes many forms. We are active diplomatically in talking to the parties and the other guarantor powers. We are active at the Security Council in New York, working for measures that will promote a settlement. I make it clear that we are not in the business of prescribing the details of a settlement—but if it is to be a peaceful, just and lasting settlement it will have to meet the interests of both communities and secure their full agreement. The history of such disputes shows that a settlement imposed without agreement will not last.

Although we would not prescribe the details of a settlement, we have views about its overall shape and form. The Secretary-General's ideas provide a good basis. He envisages a bicommunal, bizonal federation. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary put it more clearly and in friendlier terms—one country, one Cyprus, one federal Government and two communities.

The House will gather that we remain committed to one Cyprus, and there is no question of our recognising the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus. We have always considered its declaration invalid and supported UN Security Council resolution 541 of 1983, which called on states not to recognise that republic. That is not to say that we fail to acknowledge the interests of the Turkish Cypriot community. We are prepared to bear the brunt of much criticism because of our contact with that community. We see that contact as consistent with our status as a guarantor power and our obligation to deal with both communities if we are to be effective in encouraging a settlement.

Refusal to deal with one community would merely lead to entrenchment and make a settlement harder to achieve. We maintain contact with Mr. Denktash and others prominent in the Turkish Cypriot community and who have influence, so that we can do our best to encourage that community to reach a settlement. We are determined that those contacts will continue.

We see our role as encouraging the two communities towards a settlement—chivvying and urging them and other guarantor powers, and fostering the right environment for negotiations. We do so not only by substantial diplomatic efforts and intensive contacts but through our contribution to the UN force in Cyprus. In addition to speaking to both communities, it is important to encourage them to speak to each other. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary hosted a lunch in Nicosia for the two community leaders during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last October. Our High Commission in Nicosia is always trying to promote bicommunal activities and it deserves encouragement, not criticism, for doing so—as do those members of the communities who seek to develop contacts.

Since March 1993 the UN Secretary-General has tried to secure agreement on a package of confidence-building measures for Cyprus. They involve the re-opening under UN control of Varosha, a former Greek Cypriot suburb of Famagusta, and of Nicosia airport. The package is designed to facilitate progress towards overall settlement and to build mutual confidence between the two communities. The leader of the Greek Cypriot community, President Clerides, accepted the package in principle last year but the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktash, did not.

Consistent with our policy of supporting the UN, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary raised the Cyprus issue with their Turkish counterparts in January and urged them to promote a constructive approach by Mr. Denktash to the confidence-building measures. Shortly afterwards, he accepted the package in principle and UN-led talks on its implementation began in Cyprus on 17 February.

On 30 May the UN Secretary-General reported to the Security Council on progress. He concluded that a lack of political will on the Turkish Cypriot side was to blame for failure to reach agreement on the confidence-building package. He suggested five options for taking the process forward—withdrawal of the UN force in Cyprus, coercive measures against the Turkish Cypriots, a return to discussion of the set of ideas, far-reaching reflection on how to approach the Cyprus problem and a continued focus on the confidence-building measures package. Since 30 May, Mr. Denktash has said that he could accept the UN package subject to clarifications subsequently discussed with the Secretary-General's deputy special representative and the proviso that the changes are recorded in a revised UN paper.

The UN Secretary-General wrote to the Security Council on 28 June and informed it of that helpful change in Mr. Denktash's position and concluded that the two sides were now close on substance but remained divided on how the package should be presented. He hoped to break the impasse by sending the two parties an identical letter that would set out a basis for agreement. The Secretary-General observed, however, that neither leader was prepared to commit himself to co-operate with him if he proceeded as he had intended. It is now the turn of the Security Council, which is considering the Secretary-General's report and letter and expected to give a steer on the way forward in the next few days.

Our view is that a single option out of the options set out in the Secretary-General's report of 30 May is no longer an appropriate choice. We favour a combination of the two options: a process of consultation led by the Secretary-General with a view to undertaking a fundamental and far-reaching reflection on ways of approaching the Cyprus problem, and a continued effort to secure implementation of the confidence-building measures. We are working for a response which would initiate that wider process of consultation and examine the substance of the problem while not simply jettisoning what has been achieved in detailed negotiations on the confidence-building measures package.

A number of hon. Members raised the question of the possible European Union accession. I make it clear that the UK supports membership of the Community for those European countries that want to join and can meet all the conditions of membership. Cyprus applied to join the European Union in July 1990. The European Commission submitted its opinion on the application in June 1993, and the opinion confirmed Cyprus's European identity and character and its vocation to belong to the Community. On the basis of the progress achieved to date under the 1972 EC/Cyprus association agreement the opinion was generally positive about Cyprus's ability to adopt the necessary acquis within a reasonable time scale, but a number of structural and other reforms are still necessary.

The opinion also recognised the difficulties of accession ahead of an intercommunal settlement, but, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said:

"We want to remove those difficulties; we want to see Cyprus admitted. That is one reason . . . why we, perhaps more than any other outside country, are working so hard to find a solution . . . Our attitude is a positive one—to remove the obstacles to the accession of Cyprus."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 702.]

It is important to stress that it is not in the power of the United Kingdom, the European Union or, indeed, the United Nations, to compel a workable solution—

The allotted time having expired, the debate was concluded, in accordance with MADAM SPEAKER'S *statement—*[*Official Report, 14 July 1994; Vol. 246, c.1197.*]

Newspaper Prices

11.32 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): There is always a certain tension when politicians start talking about the press, and so there should be. As H. L. Mencken famously said, the proper relationship of journalists to politicians is that of dogs to lamp posts. The fact is, though, that there are some pretty savage dogs out there at the moment and they are getting more savage by the day. I think that it is up to the lamp post to take some interest in them and to try to suggest that some kind of response is required.

I wish to talk about the so-called price war—the phenomenon of predatory pricing—that is now rampant in what we used to call Fleet street, but which, post-Wapping, we have to find some other way to describe. I shall remind the House of what has been happening and give a short chronology of the background to tonight's debate.

Let us return to last year, and I shall take the House through the sequence. On 12 July 1993, *The Sun* dropped its cover price from 25p to 20p. Also on 12 July, the *Daily Mirror* responded by dropping its price to 10p for one day only. On 26 July, the *Daily Mail* increased its cover price from 30p to 32p. On 2 August, the *Daily Express* went up from 30p to 32p in line with the *Daily Mail*. On 16 August, *Today* experimented by reducing its price from 25p to 20p in the Liverpool area only. On 6 September, *The Times* dropped its price from 45p to 30p between Mondays and Fridays, and from 55p to 40p on Saturdays. On 10 October, the price of the *Independent on Sunday* rose from 90p to £1. On 12 October, *The Independent* increased its price from 45p to 50p between Mondays and Saturdays.

On 10 January 1994, *The Sun* dropped its price from 20p to 10p for one day to support its television game show promotion. On 24 January, *Today* dropped its cover price to 10p for one day only. On 23 June, *The Daily Telegraph* dropped the price of its Monday-to-Friday editions from 48p to 30p. Also on 23 June, *The Independent* dropped its price to 20p for one day only. On 24 June, *The Times* reduced its price further from 30p to 20p between Mondays and Fridays and from 40p to 30p on Saturdays. In the past few days, News International has sought to extend its predatory pricing to Scotland, with similar effects.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Lowering the price of *Today* to 10p is a classic example of predatory pricing. In connection with Scotland, however, does my hon. Friend recall that the late Roy Thomson was made to choose between continuing to own newspapers such as *The Scotsman* and giving up his STV holdings, or keeping his television holdings and giving up his newspapers? Faced with the choice, he gave up his television holdings. That might be a good precedent for making Mr. Murdoch choose between his newspapers and his extremely lucrative BSkyB. It is one or t'other.

Dr. Wright: As always, my hon. Friend has made a pertinent point. I hope to deal with it shortly, in terms of similar choices that may have to be made now. It is an interesting precedent from an era that was far more mindful of such issues; the spirit is rather different now.

That, then, is what has been happening on the news stands in the past year. The question is, why has it been happening? What is behind it? The answer is quite simple: one dominant newspaper group and one media magnate —News International and Mr. Rupert Murdoch—have sought to drive out as much of the competition as possible. There is no doubt about the intention or the strategy; there has been a certain openness about it. There can be no excuse for not knowing what has been going on.

Let me give the developments a wider context. At a time when the overall sales of newspapers are falling, it is no longer possible to expand by increasing the total share of newspaper sales, because the trend is in the opposite direction. The only way in which to prosper and advance is to seek to take existing shares, and to do so in an aggressive and, if possible, predatory way.

How can that be done? In the case that we are discussing, the organisation concerned is sitting on a large sum—a treasure. It is possible to raid that treasure in an attempt to drive out those who are not sitting on treasures. We are talking of an organisation that made a profit of £439 million last year, and is quite happy to draw on those reserves to see off the competition and strengthen its own market position, although it is making enormous short-term losses by doing so. It is sitting on a pot of gold because it is sitting on an empire.

The empire involves a third of the press here, but it is a global empire, with a huge array of newspapers and magazines across this country, Australia and the United States, as well as Sky Television, Twentieth Century Fox films, Fox Television in the United States and a developing interest in satellite television in the far east. It is a global media empire and it is possible to draw on its resources to engage in predatory pricing here. There is no dispute about the fact that that is happening because the strategy is clear.

The intention has been described by a number of people. *The Independent* is one of the newspapers that has been in the firing line and it has seen its circulation drop from 334,000 a year ago to 277,000 now. For its main enemy that is no doubt seen as a great achievement, but I believe that it is an enormous loss in terms of pluralism and diversity in this country. It is hard to dissent from the view of Mr. Andreas Whittham Smith, the editor of *The Independent*, who wrote a signed editorial in the newspaper last month in which he said:

"Two right-wing ideologues, Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black, have set about destroying the quality newspaper market."

That is the intention and, from their point of view, it is succeeding.

I prefer the comment which was relayed by the editor of *The Times*, Mr. Peter Stothard, who said:

"I have had one letter of complaint from a vicar who did not think it"—

the price cut—

"was right."

As ever, a solitary vicar, if no one else, understands what is going on and a solitary vicar understands that there are ethical, moral and democratic issues surrounding this issue which need to be addressed.

There can be no doubt that it is News International's ability to draw on its reserves which is enabling it to sustain the strategy. Reliable reports suggest that *The Times* is losing at least 2p on every copy that it now sells, and some estimates are higher than that. Despite a 42 per cent. rise in circulation as a result of its pricing policy, its daily revenue is now £45,000 lower that it was last autumn, despite adding 230,000 copies to its circulation. It is taking huge losses in pursuit of the strategy upon which it has embarked.

The pricing policy of *The Sun* was the precursor of the strategy for *The Times*. Its circulation is 20 per cent. higher than the year before the predatory pricing started, but the 5p price cut means that it is earning £70,000 a day less than it was before it increased its sales.

The figures that I have given are rather modest. Some of the figures from the media analysts are more startling.

Mr. Dalyell: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to give an even more immodest figure. Of the 20p for *The Times*, I am told that 17.5p goes to the wholesalers and retailers who distribute and sell the newspaper and the 2.5p that comes back to News International does not begin to cover the cost of printing and paper, which I am told is about 15p per copy. I believe that those are accurate figures.

Dr. Wright: They are accurate, and extraordinary, figures. Although the figures differ depending on the source that one uses, they all point in the same direction. It is not disputed, even by sources close to News International, that the figures are of that order. It is deliberately taking huge losses in pursuit of a certain objective, and it will take those losses over an exceedingly prolonged period because it can afford to do so. I shall say in a moment what I believe the outcome of that will be.

If we take seriously the Office of Fair Trading's obligations in relation to predatory pricing, and if we cast our eye over the cases that that body has looked into over the years, we must find that this is a classic illustration of predatory pricing. Predatory pricing occurs when a dominant player in the market deliberately sets out to cut prices in order to drive out competitors, using its market to do so.

I found it extraordinary that the Director General of Fair Trading said last September that he could not become involved in this case because it seemed to him to be merely "aggressive pricing" rather than predatory pricing. It is interesting that now, in the wake of the further decrease in the price of *The Times*, the position has changed and some sort of inquiry can be held. I shall deal with that point in a moment.

Let us consider the ground rules for competition policy, about which the Minister will doubtless have something to say. Section 2(1) of the Competition Act 1980 defines an anti-competitive practice as

"a course of conduct pursued by persons"

in the course of business, which

"has or is intended to have or is likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition in connection with the production, supply or acquisition of goods".

Surely that is precisely what is happening now—it is a directly anti-competitive practice used by a monopoly player in the market to drive out competition.

The question is, what is the response? Let us look beyond what has been happening for the past year. Mr. Rupert Murdoch informed us that his vision of the future is an industry in which they may be only three newspapers —*The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, and *The Sun*. That is his vision of the plurality of British newspapers. Or course, he already owns two of the three.

We have to make up our minds—do we think that such behaviour and such ambition are consistent with what the House has always said, from Pilkington onwards, about the need to guarantee pluralism and the need for the state to prevent monopoly players from exercising excessive power? Do we still hold the same views, or do we want to be rolled over by Mr. Murdoch so that he can realise his vision of a future with only *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun*?

Mr. Dalyell: It is a matter of record that that is precisely what Mr. Murdoch said to Sir David English—it is not only a figment of Opposition Members' imagination. He is on record as saying that we would be left with those three newspapers.

Dr. Wright: Indeed, I think that Mr. Murdoch said not only with ambition but with a certain zestful pride that it would show that the strategy had worked and that there had been another gain for his media empire. The question is, where does it leave the rest of us? Where does it leave democracy, choice and diversity?

That is not to be seen as aberrant behaviour. It should not take us by surprise, because in a sense it is only what large businesses always do when they can get away with it. That is why the cases that the Office of Fair Trading has had to investigate over the years are exactly comparable with that case. For a major player, in its own terms that is rational market behaviour. If it is possible to do such things, it is rational to do them. If the law and the regulations are such that it is possible to engage in predatory pricing to drive out the competition, it is rational business behaviour to do so.

That is precisely what is happening now—because such developments have not been challenged or checked. Therefore, as in other business areas, the attempt is made to drive out a competitor that one does not like. If one can afford to take great losses in achieving that, one will do so.

The problem arises because we are talking not about baked beans but about newspapers. Traditionally we have thought that it was rather important to guarantee the integrity and plurality of newspapers, and to protect them from such business behaviour. There was something special about newspapers. There was something special, something vital to our democracy, about the ventilation and distribution of opinion. It was not a business like any other.

However, we now have people like Mr. Murdoch—

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Has my hon. Friend noticed that the Minister appears to be doing his correspondence? Even now I do not think that he is with us. Does my hon. Friend think that that bodes well for the quality of the reply that he is likely to receive to his excellent speech?

Dr. Wright: My hon. Friend makes the sort of impish point in which we all delight. However, having spent two or three months locked up with the Minister in the Committee that was discussing the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, I am used to his being otherwise engaged while I am making important points. Indeed, we had an exchange on that subject in Committee.

What I have described is rational market behaviour, but it is rational market behaviour that is simply not acceptable when applied to newspapers and to opinion. We see such behaviour elsewhere, too, of course. If we cast our eyes around at the operations, including those of Mr. Murdoch, of media moguls in other parts of the world, we see exactly what is going on, and how different regulatory systems require different responses.

In Australia, for example, the Government have traditionally been a wholly owned subsidiary of the

[Dr. Wright]

Murdoch empire. But in the United States Mr. Murdoch ran into difficulties, because there was a much tighter regulatory regime there. When Senator Edward Kennedy sought to reactivate a rather ailing regulatory regime, Mr. Murdoch, according to the recent book about him by William Shawcross, described it as "liberal totalitarianism", and set out to get Kennedy through his tabloid newspapers in the United States. Fortunately, the regulatory regime got him instead. In New York and in Boston he had to back off, because there were rules there that made it impossible for him to proceed.

Unfortunately, the position here is different. It is well understood that one of the large anomalies or large holes in the Broadcasting Act 1990 is the fact that it does not prevent people with satellite television interests from moving into newspapers. That made possible, in a way that was most helpful to Mr. Murdoch, the kind of cross-media ownership that we have traditionally taken steps to prevent. At the time, he was thought to be extremely helpful to the Conservative party. There may be different views about that now, but at the time the view was that the hole had been nicely opened up so that Mr. Murdoch could walk through it.

We are having this discussion at a time when there is a tremendous push to sweep away the existing legislative inhibitions to cross-media ownership. We are being told almost daily by those who have power inside the industry that the time has come to move decisively in the direction of further deregulation and that the only way in which to become global players in the contemporary media business is to sweep away all the regulatory structures.

If we look around the world, we see exactly what such a change might mean. One does not have to look much further than Italy where Mr. Berlusconi is now happily bringing neo-fascists into his Government. He sits at the apex of a media-political empire. One can see there the potential consequences of our sweeping away regulatory regimes. Indeed, if we are serious about pluralism, we must be serious about enshrining pluralism in structures that have some chance of delivering it.

This is a matter of some urgency. The Office of Fair Trading has, I am afraid, not acted with sufficient urgency. It would be extremely serious and damaging if—the Office of Fair Trading having announced that it was finally to look at the matter, after having said initially that it would not —we now had a protracted period in which the OFT brooded on the matter for the best part of a year, after which it might—or might not—make a recommendation to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. By that time, the fate of important and serious newspapers would have been irretrievably damaged and some of them might have disappeared. I press the need for urgency in relation to the issue now.

There is also a longer-term issue, which is that of media ownership. We must think afresh about the nature of pluralism in terms of developing media conglomerates. The European Union drew attention to the matter a few years ago in its Green Paper on pluralism in the media. The issue is there and there is a tremendous drive from those inside the industry to throw off the regulatory structures. We must start to ask what the public interest is; in relation to this issue, we must ask what the public interest is in ensuring that newspapers survive and that the plurality of newspapers survives.

Sometimes we have cause to be grateful for things that may seem disconcerting at the time. I believe that we shall come to be grateful to *The Sunday Times* for its actions a week or two ago in showing how certain actions in this place can seem extraordinarily reprehensible to people outside although they evidently seem perfectly normal to people inside. I hope that out of that intervention, some good will come. Similarly, I think and hope that this price war—this predatory pricing—in so far as it reveals the ability of a powerful player to seek to use his power simply to drive out competitors so that his market share can be increased, will be so offensive to the public interest that it will produce renewed attention to the question of how we can guarantee pluralism and diversity.

We have a price war raging at the moment which is profoundly damaging to diversity and profoundly damaging to democracy. The Government, in their deregulatory mode, seem to find it perfectly acceptable and nothing to worry about. I assure the Minister that many people in the country are profoundly worried by what is happening and would grieve enormously if serious titles were lost. It would be damaging to the people who work for them, it would be damaging to the people who read them and it would be damaging to our democracy.

11.58 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): If I am the only Back Bencher who wants to speak, I can assure the House that I do not intend to speak for all that long.

I declare various interests. I earned money by writing for various newspapers, and I have had lunch with various people in the media.

At the end of this debate, I intend to read the papers that have been sent to me by the public affairs people from News International. The only part that I have picked up so far, because I thought that I should come to this debate, is that I may be wrong in saying that the subsidies to *The Times* have come from outside this country. That may be accurate; I do not know, and I do not particularly care.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) has done a service to politics in his book on politics, and he has done a service to the newspaper industry in introducing this debate today. He has clearly stated many of the issues.

I come to this debate with a history. When News International took over *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, I did not support my party on the motion tabled by the Labour party. There were strong arguments that that takeover should have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The rules as I interpreted them, and as the Government should have interpreted them, were that *The Sunday Times* was clearly a profitable newspaper, and there was no ground on which the Government should rely in not referring *The Sunday Times* takeover, even though it was said that that was the only way to save *The Times*.

It is worth remembering that there is a spectrum of newspaper pricing. It would be possible for a proprietor or a company owning a newspaper to distribute it free. In many of our constituencies, newspapers are distributed free. The distinction which the hon. Gentleman would

make is that those newspapers are not distributed free for long at a loss. They rely on getting sufficient advertising to make them a commercial justification.

It is worth noticing that we have one broadsheet daily newspaper, *The Guardian*, which has a structure that was set up especially so it could be produced at a loss. The Scott trust is designed to keep *The Guardian* going, even though at times it may look as though it is at risk of making a profit.

Perhaps the distinction between *The Guardian* and other newspapers is that it is not a threat to other newspapers. No one can claim that *The Daily Telegraph* loses a serious number of readers to *The Guardian*. It may not gain the young readers that go to or stay with *The Guardian* for as long as they can face the letters page.

The *Observer* was a loss-making newspaper for many of its 200 years of history. At one stage, it was bought by an oil company, Atlantic Richfield, and it was owned to greater or lesser degrees of distinction by Lonrho. There was a time when the *Observer* was losing about the same as its cover price on every issue sold, but no other newspaper seriously claimed that the *Observer* was making inroads into its market.

The reason why the *Sunday Express* was losing some of its share of the market from its previously phenomenally successful position was not because the *Observer* was being sold at a loss. I do not think that commercially successful editors of *The Sunday Times* would argue that the *Observer* being sold at a loss was serious competition to them. I think that the reason for that is partly ideology.

Now that the *Observer* is in new ownership, it tends to run its front page as though it was the Monday of *The Guardian*, where the story is not quite as reliable or as balanced as the stories on other days of the week. The *Observer* did not go in for predatory pricing. It tended to price itself at roughly the same level as *The Sunday Times*.

If people were to ask about the distinction between the price wars now and those loss-making newspapers, I think that it is the increasing of the loss of *The Times*. As to the pricing of *The Sun*, one can argue that the paper is still making a profit. I do not want to argue *The Sun* case too strongly. My view is that *The Sun* is in a declining market and its sales will fall faster that those of the *News of the World*. The reason for that is the combination of two issues.

The first issue is the change in the way in which people go to work. As more and more people drive to work, not only on days when there is a rail strike but as a general change in pattern and as a result of greater access to motoring, they do not pick up a newspaper at a news stand on the way to work as they did when they went by public transport, by foot or even by bike. That is a change.

The second issue is that, over the next two or three decades, or possibly in the next two or three years, more and more people will set the standards for what they take home and what they do and buy at work, which are higher than the ones that they had in the past. A significantly growing number of purchasers of *The Sun* will say that it is not the newspaper that they want their children to take once they start reading one. A general uplift will take place, which will be reflected in our politics and newspapers.

The suggestion from Rupert Murdoch that *The Sun* will not just continue to be a boobs and bottoms newspaper is correct. I must say, however, that no one should be worried about naked bodies, because, if we take our clothes off and look in the mirror, we will discover that we have one for ourselves. One often finds more naked flesh in *The Guardian* than in *The Sun*.

The change in the nature of the newspaper market applies just as much to the discrimination of readers in all part of our community.

As the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood has said, the interesting question relates to *The Times*. Why are we ignoring our normal monopoly and fair trading conventions, if not our rules, when a newspaper deliberately doubles its loss on a sustained basis? We are talking not about a one-off price reduction, but about a sustained campaign to reduce the price of the newspaper.

It is not for me to argue for Mr. Black, Hollinger Incorporated or the Telegraph Group, although I have friends who work for it. It is not for me to argue whether Mr. Black, or his directors, were wrong to get involved in the price war. It may have been wrong for the Telegraph Group to cut its price, but I do not want to second-guess it. A price war requires two to tango.

As a result of that price war, the number of broadsheet newspapers will fall significantly, and rather faster than the normal process of movement in the newspaper market. We are used to seeing people create newspapers in this country. My namesake, but no relation as far as I know, because I suspect that he was born without parents and died without children, Horatio Bottomley, showed how it was possible to build up newspapers, in part by pandering to people's prejudice and by being a great advertiser.

We have seen the creation of great newspaper families, in part by them backing good editors and by conducting vigorous, but often unsuccessful, campaigns. I cannot think of a single campaign run by the Beaverbrook papers Press between the wars that was successful, although I have not subjected them to detailed analysis. People quite enjoy campaigning, even it is not a success.

We have seen newspapers increase their circulation to 5 million copies, and then decline. That is part of the normal cycle, and it is certainly not for the House to argue that we should have a set number of broadsheet newspapers—so-called serious, quality newspapers.

In this country, we have the distinction of a greater diversity of newspapers and easier access to creating a newspaper than elsewhere. It is interesting to note that France has one Sunday newspaper, of no great account. We now have good weekend newspapers on Saturday and Sunday—in part due to the innovations of *The Independent* —which offer fine, detailed coverage.

The current problems have arisen because we have been setting the wrong rules for the media, and not applying the rules we have. I have already referred to the *Sunday Times* takeover, which was a open breach of the law. In the past five years, we have set laws about cross-media ownership, but we have focused on the wrong target. Technology has overtaken us, plus some people's clever wriggling around the regulations.

We said that major newspapers could not become satellite broadcasters. Maxwell BSB did not work, but Murdoch Sky did work. We now recognise that there will be no shortage of capacity in satellite broadcasting—once more Astra satellites are operational, as many channels as possible will offer the service. I suggest that we should accept what the major media groups, including Pearson, Associated Newspapers and Guardian Media, have said. They believe that we should drop the bar on those groups

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

having more than a 20 per cent. stake in terrestrial broadcasting. It may be too late for some but it may open up the market in a better way.

We should try to treat newspapers as though they are ordinary industries, as far as possible. The same approach goes for rules that apply to journalists and for the ownership of newspapers. That would suggest that the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be asked to examine newspapers. I think that they should recommend that any group or individual should be required to divest if it or he has a national newspaper circulation that is 20 per cent. of the market or more, unless there is only one title. If the group or individual has one title that has 35 or 38 per cent. of the market, that is fine.

We know, of course, that newspapers can cross subsidise on a loss-making basis, which is what *The Times* is doing. I suggest that it has increased its losses by 50 per cent., if not 100 per cent. Unless it can show that at that level of pricing it can, with a reasonable time scale, start making a profit because of extra advertising revenue or extra sales, it should be required to stop the loss-making subsidy or face a mandatory divestment order. That would wake people up to some extent. At the same time, it would be reasonable and fair.

Why did that approach not apply to the *Observer*? The answer is that, in terms of the market, it did not matter. We should be able to say what does matter in the market. We should have some discretion. If someone said of the magazine market, in which I think there are 5,000 titles, "Why is Naim Attallah able to subsidise *The Oldie* for as long as he chooses?"—I am sorry that he is choosing not to do it for longer, because I think it is a good magazine, or at least the writing is good—the answer is that it does not matter all that much.

If someone says, "What about the *Literary Review* and its subsidy?"—£25 comes to me every other month if Auberon Waugh accepts one of my articles—the answer again is that that does not matter too much to competitors.It does not threaten *The Times Literary Supplement* and the book review pages in serious newspapers.

There is a scale within which some things obviously matter while others do not. We can argue about where between those two points we should start paying attention. I would argue that the issue of *The Times* is way beyond any margin of debate.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I would not dissent from any of the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, but I caution him on where he is taking the argument. I think that he will agree that, if we take as an example that delightful magazine, *The Oldie*, running at a loss, the test of whether it is guilty of predatory competitive behaviour is not that it is running at a loss but whether there is predatory pricing that is designed to force other magazines out of the market. None of the publications to which the hon. Gentleman has referred could possibly be accused of predatory pricing, albeit they were or are running at a loss.

Mr. Bottomley: Maybe so. I can only offer my thoughts, which may be inadequate because this is the second time today that I have bothered the House with a few reflections.

I think that we are in basic agreement. Some things matter, some things matter more and some things matter a great deal. I have a friendly disrespect for the press. I am happy to condemn it. I think that it should face the same controls as we do as Back-Bench Members in Parliament, where there are few rules that really restrict us.

It boils down to what people think we can get away with or what they are willing to tolerate from us. Those are the considerations that matter most. As I said during the debate on referring issues to the Committee of Privileges, we should set standards for ourselves. At the same time, the press should set standards for itself. Our standards should be the higher. That would seem to be reasonable.

It is more elegant if the press criticises politicians rather than politicians criticising the press. In this instance, we are not criticising it. Instead, we are considering the business side of newspapers, and that matters more.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman is making a thoughtful speech. On the business side, can *The Times*, at a price of 20p, be seriously expected to make money without at first killing off at least one other broadsheet newspaper? If the answer to that question is no, is the Murdoch policy of *The Times* at 20p not a clear example of predatory pricing, which makes the hon. Gentleman's worries all too real?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman may be right. That is a matter now for the OFT. I agree that it does not have to spend so very long looking into the matter, at least on a preliminary basis. There is a time constraint, because of the market conditions.

If News International, the publishers of *The Times*, can show that, even if other newspapers came out of the market, it has the prospect of making money at 20p—it does not have to guarantee it—I would not want to stand in the way of such a large donation to readers. Clearly, it is good that people can buy a newspaper at a lower price. At times, newspapers have acted like a cartel in pushing prices up. We are now getting at them for cut-throat competition. Life is like the tide—a sort of sine curve. At the moment, we are concerned about cut-throat competition.

The Independent started to lose its way before price cutting began. To depersonalise the matter, its proprietors made a mistake in saying that they wanted to knock out *The Sunday Correspondent*, and their greatest mistake was to launch *The Independent on Sunday*. They came into the market before securing their base, and they have been unable to keep both going effectively. I reserve my comments on one or two of the editorial judgments until after the editorship has changed.

Not surprisingly, the slide in *The Daily Telegraph*'s circulation began before predatory pricing started. The *Evening Standard* has also seen a reduction in its circulation. If I were discussing the matter outside the House, I would say that, if both *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard* spend their time attacking my wife, they cannot expect their sales to stay up, because she is one of the more popular people around. If they tell people that she is unpopular, they will lose interest.

A new newspaper will be launched the next parliamentary day—today, in normal terms. People will stand at 40 spots around London and give away 100,000 copies of the newspaper. Presumably it will begin as a

loss-making newspaper, but it will not keep going for long at a loss because there is no big pot of gold to keep it going. It must become a commercial success.

What the House is saying to the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the proprietors of News International is that we are not interested in their driving other newspapers out of business and then putting up their price, having driven part of the competition out of the market. They must demonstrate that they will keep the price low, whatever happens in the competitive marketplace.

If they then say that it is a challenging business and ask why we are so jealous about them making money out of Sky after it nearly went bust, we must answer that that is the past. We are concerned about the future, and what provides the best opportunities in the medium term for media consumers. We are on the side of the readership and, in the context of television and radio, those who watch and listen.

If News International is interested in my views on this matter, it should start to pay more attention to the price at which it makes its encryption service available to satellite television. That, too, will be a matter of interest.

Where, for some reason, there is an effective monopoly, it will require people taking a legislative interest which, in time, will become stronger and more effective than some of the other controls that we thought we had brought in—not against News International but to create a media system that allows competition, entry, adventure and entrepreneurs but avoids unfair competition.

There is not much more for me to say, except that the best thing is for News International to say at what price *The Times* could be sold profitably. If it then says that *The Times* is not a commercial proposition, it should try to find a solution for it that does not require sustained, unfair price competition for its competitors.

In the next five or 10 years, some newspapers will go out of business. A battle is going on between *Today* and the *Daily Mirror*, and I do not know who will win. It does not matter to me whether both survive, but I doubt whether both will.

I do not wish to pick on a particular Sunday newspaper, but if I were talking to a friend in a pub, I would say that I am not sure that we gain a great deal from the *Sunday People*. It does not add much that does not already exist in the *Sunday Mirror* and the *News of the World*—or perhaps vice versa.

In the daily market, I am not sure what the long-term place of the *Daily Star* is. However, if we looked 20 years or more into the past—I forget the precise timing—we would remember that *The Sun* would probably have gone out of business if Rupert Murdoch had not come along and turned it into a successful newspaper with his editors. The saving of newspapers can therefore be as important as their destruction.

We should have a reasonably fair playing field. The only level playing field that I ever encountered was in a water polo swimming pool, which is rather easier as it has less unlevel ground than most. If we speak clearly about what we think the principles should be, we can let the outcome be uncertain. One pays for it, but one avoids the unfairness that was wisely mentioned by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood.

12.19 am

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I want to make a short contribution on the impact of the price war on the regional press. I have to tell the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who gave a most interesting discourse, that *The Sunday People* is widely read in Rotherham.

When I was a boy at school, there seemed to be many more newspapers than there are now. When any newspaper drops out of existence, for whatever reason, I think that democracy is diminished. The loss of former Ministers or their replacement today is a headline; the loss of a newspaper is extremely bad news. I agree with Benjamin Franklin, who said:

"If I had to choose between a government without newspapers or newspapers without government I would have no hesitation in opting for the latter."

We have had price wars, or circulation wars, before in this country—notably in the 1930s, when giant circulation wars were conducted by giving away encyclopaedias, not by cutting prices. It would be a nice treat today if *The Times* were competing by offering "Encyclopaedia Britannica" instead of chopping its price by more than 50 per cent.

Although I want to enter some words of reservation about *The Times*, I think that, in the past year or so, its coverage has improved immensely. Its features are strong. Its sense of news—I speak as a former president of the National Union of Journalists—is extremely positive and interesting. Today it led on Mr. Santer's repudiation of the Prime Minister's views on Europe—a tough, no-nonsense news story, which I think other newspapers should be running with. Perhaps, instead of conducting the price war, it could have stuck to its new, rather more virile, news feature and comments service, and handled the other competition on fair terms.

I am very worried about the fact that *The Independent* is under threat. *The Independent* has been a positive contribution to the British press and, were it to go out of existence, it would emphasise once more the fact that we are living in a country in which, in recent years, we know the price of everything and the value of nothing. I hold *The Independent* in high esteem. It is a paper of great value, which has contributed much to debate in our society.

It is not for the House—not for politicians or Ministers—to say which paper lives and which dies, but, inasmuch as we have regulation of anything, we are entitled to hold a view about pricing that will place that newspaper under severe threat.

In addition, the pricing war that is now under way places the existence of some of our regional papers under potential pressure, according to research that I have undertaken with the regional press. Statistics from the Audit Bureau of Circulation are not yet available for the first half of this year, during which *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* jumped over the precipice on the price front, but the signs are that sales are down, and that advertising is under threat. The fact that newspapers such as the *Yorkshire Post* in my part of the country and the *Northern Echo* continue to maintain a strong existence should be important to Parliament.

We live in a centralised society. We live in the only country in Europe—I speak now about what is read in England although it also affects Scotland, Wales and Ireland—where the press is entirely focused in one city. The French press is more regional. I think that the strength of the German economy and German society is that there

[Mr. Denis MacShane]

is no one city that, as it were, controls the free flow of information in the way that London does in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalyell: Does my hon. Friend recognise that, if there were any serious threat to either the *Glasgow Herald* or *The Scotsman*, many Scots would think that the quality of life in Scotland was thereby diminished? It is a serious matter, as my hon. Friend says, not only for the regional press, but for the Scottish press—certainly in relation to advertising. When the threat last arose and Roy Thomson faced problems, he was made to choose. His editor, Alistair Dunnett, said that at that time the score was laid firmly on the line that it was one or the other, and people could not use television to harm competitors.

Mr. MacShane: My mother, who lives in Glasgow, and many of my aunts worry each morning about which paper they will buy, the *Glasgow Herald* or *The Scotsman*—both are distinguished in their own way, and both contribute much to the different climate of political culture and debate in Scotland. Were those papers to be faced with any serious challenge to their existence by a pricing war determined in London but okayed in the United States, that would be a serious threat to democratic debate in our country.

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency for households to buy only one newspaper. The hon. Member for Eltham mentioned the changing pattern of newspaper purchase and reading habits. Recently, when I have found myself jingling the coins in my pocket on a railway station, I have opted for *The Times* simply because it is half the price of my favourite reads, the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian*. As a materialist, I have to count my pennies.

A variety of press is expressed through our healthy and positive regional daily papers. I am referring not to the free advertising sheets, but those papers which employ a substantial number of journalists. The *Western Morning News* has 63 reporters covering its region, compared with *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*, which have none covering that region. Those regional daily papers make a great contribution to our regional culture.

I hope that the Government are prepared to accept such concerns and to support the reference to the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if it is relevant. I also hope that the Government are prepared to join in the cross-party desire to discover what measures can be taken. The moment one regulates, introduces laws or sets up a commission that can determine pricing or advertising, one interferes in the pure logic of the market. Most people in this country want a free, varied, pluralistic and decentralised press.

I fully support the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), and I am delighted to see hon. Friends present who, like me, are concerned about the plurality of the press in this country. The House will have to return to this subject.

12.28 am

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on an excellent speech and on his good fortune in winning this debate.

The price war is a symptom of a much larger problem. Gradually and remorselessly, control of most of what we see and read is slipping into the hands of a handful of ruthless megalomaniacs. As other hon. Members have said, it is perhaps the most serious threat to democracy in this country.

Mr. Murdoch is only the most obvious of the megalomaniacs with a grasp on our national newspaper and television industries. He owns five national newspapers and 50 per cent. of BSkyB. He appears to enjoy special arrangements that apply only to him. I understand that a regulation is enforced against all other ITV companies stating that at least 50 per cent.—or perhaps 60 per cent.—of what they broadcast must be produced domestically. That does not apply to satellite television, with the result that Mr. Murdoch is able to buy off-the-peg junk television from Australia and America. He is gradually dragging down standards in ITV, which has to move down market to compete with him. He is also able to accumulate the sort of profits that have allowed him to engage in the present ruthless price-cutting war.

The Murdoch press has polluted our culture during the past 20 years. The effect of Mr. Murdoch has not been just on those newspapers that he happens to own; it has been on competitors who have felt obliged to go down market to compete with him. Nowhere has the effect of *The Sun* been greater than on the quality of the *Daily Mirror*, which has deteriorated badly in recent years.

Now there is the spectacle of ITV going down market to compete with BSkyB. Gradually, documentaries such as "First Tuesday" and "This Week" have disappeared. "World in Action" is under pressure to move to a slot at 11 o'clock at night, when it will have an audience of 2 million instead of 8 million. Murdoch's effect on ITV will be similar to his effect on the *Daily Mirror*. Everyone will go down market to compete.

Of course, it is not only Murdoch who is involved. During the past two years there has been the rise, for example, of Mr. Michael Green of Carlton Television. He now owns a great swathe of ITV and he was donating money to the Conservative party even as he bid for the franchise. He also controls 36 per cent. of Independent Television News and 36 per cent. of Independent Radio News by virtue of the fact that he controls two of the major ITV companies.

Mr. Gerry Robinson, who came from the catering division of Granada Television, now has a similar hold on two other commercial television companies and a large stake in the ownership of ITN. I believe that that is already being reflected in ITN, which increasingly consists of one anchor man talking to another anchor man, usually about a mile from ITN headquarters. There is pressure, too, to move "News at Ten" out of the way to make room for junk television—to 6.30 pm or 11.30 pm when the audiences will be similarly diminished.

All that is having an effect on our national culture. It is not a left or right-wing bias that worries me; it is trivialisation. It is becoming increasingly hard for the average citizen to discover from the daily newspapers or the television that he or she is likely to be watching what is going on in the world. Already one sees the catastrophe in Rwanda having difficulty in outbidding Prince Charles or whatever the story of the night happens to be on ITV news. That is a large problem. It will become increasingly difficult to have a diverse political culture if we do not have a diverse source of news and information.

There are some obvious solutions. The most obvious is a little bit of liberal anti-monopoly legislation—a thought that I am sure will appeal to easily the majority of British citizens. It would not cost any Government any money, and would require only a little bit of political will. The proposition that there should be only one daily and one Sunday newspaper per proprietor would not prove politically controversial. It would make a big difference to the diversity of newspaper ownership in Britain.

If we wanted to go a step further we could lay down one or two rules about the kind of proprietors or corporations that would be entitled to bid for the assets that come on the market. We could go down the American road—I do not necessarily argue that we should—and say that only corporations owned by British citizens or at least EC citizens could compete. Mr. Murdoch has already changed his nationality once from Australian to American in order to come within the American regulations. It is a stunt that I do not think that he would find it easy to pull twice.

There is great pressure to reduce the limits on cross-media ownership. They should be maintained. The regulations about the percentage of domestic production that already apply to independent television should be extended to Sky television. The fact that they have not been is an anomaly which I assume is a pay-off to Mr. Murdoch for his support over the years for the ruling party. It is an anomaly that cannot be justified and should be removed.

The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) said that something must be done about Murdoch's monopoly of the encryption system. Unless something is done about it, he will maintain his grip on satellite television and there will be no question of competition there. Something must be done to deprive him of that monopoly.

With regard to independent television, the Broadcasting Act 1990, as everyone knows—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. Obviously, on occasions such as this, the subject matter is fairly broad, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that the subject is newspaper prices.

Mr. Mullin: One of the questions that we must ask ourselves is from where Mr. Murdoch has obtained the enormous amount of loot that enables him to cut the price of his newspapers and to sustain losses of the sort that he is sustaining. The answer is that it comes from other parts of his empire, one of which is satellite television. That is why television is relevant. I am also describing the overall effect that the price war has on our political culture, of which television is an aspect. Mr. Murdoch has other television assets as well. He is also getting his hands on a slice of our publishing industry.

I shall not dwell on it, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I return for a moment to where I was. Before the Broadcasting Act 1990, ITV was not broke and did not need fixing. I fail to see why the drift towards a monopoly that is beginning to occur there should be allowed to continue. In fact, it should be reversed.

We should not be afraid of regulation. Of course the state must be careful how it regulates the media. The only excuse is that one is regulating in the name of greater diversity, plurality and a greater flow of argument and information than already exists. Regulation has worked extremely well in the BBC over the years. It is one reason why the corporation remains the envy of the world and why even the Government decided the other day to keep the BBC more or less as it is. We should not be afraid to create by way of regulation a newspaper industry that is as free and high quality as the BBC is in broadcasting.

12.40 am

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on securing this Adjournment debate on an important issue, which has attracted thoughtful and knowledgeable speeches from hon. Members representing both major parties. Perhaps it is a pity that no representative of any minority part is present to participate in a debate on an issue that affects the health of our democracy. Nothing comes nearer to touching that than the variety of our newspapers and the diversity of views that they contain. The newspaper industry has played an important part in our debates and it is right that, before the House rises for a prolonged period, we should have found time to debate a development that is likely to precipitate a crisis for a number of newspapers.

I have twice written to the Director General of Fair Trading about the price cuts at *The Times*. Price cutting and competition at an unrealistically low price is becoming a feature of the Murdoch press generally. Leaving aside the references to *The Sun* already made tonight, there is the interesting example of *Today* launching a Scottish edition at 10p. There is no way that one could justify such a price in calculating the commercial cost of producing that newspaper and the profit one could hope to make. That pricing is clearly a decision to obtain a market share by undercutting, at a loss, existing newspapers in that market.

Last September, I wrote to the Director General of Fair Trading drawing his attention to the reduction in the price of *The Times* to 30p. I will quote part of Sir Bryan Carsberg's reply, in declining to undertake an inquiry. I apologise to the House for wearying it with a quotation at this time, but it is a short one. He said:

"At times there is a fine line between aggressive price competition and predatory pricing. I am satisfied on the basis of information available"—

last September—

"that the reduction in the cover price of *The Times* reflects a calculated commercial decision by News International."

If there was only

"a fine line between aggressive price competition and predatory pricing"

last September, when *The Times* reduced its price to 30p, the subsequent reduction in the past month to 20p marches right across that fine line.

As the Minister is aware, I wrote again to Sir Bryan, suggesting that there is an even more compelling case for an inquiry into whether *The Times* is guilty of predatory pricing. Sir Bryan has agreed to an informal inquiry, to establish whether there are grounds for a formal reference. I argue that there is an overwhelming case for such a formal reference. It is hard in logic to avoid the conclusion that there is a case for a formal inquiry.

The grounds for an inquiry into predatory pricing were set out by the Director General of Fair Trading last year following his report on Thamesway. In that report, Sir Bryan set out three tests by which he would assess whether a company was guilty of predatory pricing. The first test was whether the new price was bound to incur losses for the company that had set it. I have to say that it is beyond contention that the reduction in the price of *The Times* to 20p will incur losses. It is not, as Sir Bryan expressed it last

[Mr. Robin Cook]

September, a "calculated commercial decision". There is plainly no commercial justification for a reduction in price to 20p. It is clearly a decision driven by only one consideration—to undercut the rest of the market at a loss and thereby behave in a predatory fashion.

Before *The Times* had its first price cut, it was selling at 45p. All the figures are highly confidential, and therefore it is possible, as some of my hon. Friends have done, to produce different figures, but they all point broadly to the same conclusion. We understand that, at that stage, the margin on every copy of *The Times* was 30p. That is the amount left over after meeting the direct printing and distribution costs.

If that is the case and 45p produced a 35p margin, when one reduces the price to 20p, one is left with a margin of only 5p, because the printing and distribution costs have remained constant throughout that process. Those figures might be out by a penny or two here or there. It may indeed be 2½p, as one of my hon. Friends suggested. It might be only 3p, as I have seen suggested by one of the rivals to *The Times*. But even a margin of 5p comes nowhere near meeting the publishing costs involved in running the journalist enterprise with its overheads, not to mention its indirect advertising costs.

It is probable that *The Times* is now running at an annual loss in excess of between £20 million and £25 million a year. In other words, the decision to reduce its price to 20p was taken in the full knowledge that it would incur substantial and continuing losses, which have no prospect of being turned around by any increase in sales, because the margin on the increased copies sold comes nowhere near making a contribution to the overheads. In short, the losses are possible only because *The Times* is part of an immense empire and is now being cross-subsidised by the profits of other parts of that empire.

The problem is that, if *The Times* behaves in that way, it is setting a price that cannot be matched by independent newspapers, such as *The Independent* or *The Guardian*, which do not belong to large conglomerates and cannot hope to obtain large, continuing subsidies to cope with the losses that they would incur were they to try to compete with *The Times* at its present price. I believe that it is incontestable that the first test has been met and that the price reduction is increasing the losses for a paper that was already making a loss before the cut.

The second test was whether predatory pricing was a feasible business strategy in the particular market—in this case the newspaper market. I say with some regret that I fear that it is only too likely to be so. Indeed, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) made the perfectly reasonable point that Rupert Murdoch's conduct is rational market behaviour whether or not we like it. The objective of predatory pricing is to put out of business rivals in the market. That objective could be achieved.

Indeed, there is already evidence that predatory pricing is working towards that objective. Sales of *The Independent* are now down by 20 per cent. on a year ago, and that loss occurred even before the latest cut in the price of *The Times*. Since that cut to 20p, the major regional and the Scottish and Welsh newspapers have between them lost some 30,000 daily sales.

I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane). We in Britain already have a much more centralised and homogenised national newspaper industry than any other country in Europe: all the others have much more diverse, regionally based media industries. We already have dominant national newspapers that produce broadly similar editions, from Kent to Caithness. If we were to lose our existing regional press and the Scottish and Welsh newspapers, we would lose one of the last remaining elements of pluralism in our printed media.

The Scotsman, *The Glasgow Herald* and—this is a studiously politically neutral observation—even *The Birmingham Post* are part of the richness of their local politics; they contribute to regional political life, and therefore to the pluralism and diversity of British political life. All those newspapers have made losses since the introduction of price cuts by *The Times*. The problem is that, even if only a relatively modest number of readers desert them—attracted by the new price of *The Times*—that minority will destablise their finances for all their readers. A 25 per cent. loss of readers might be sufficient to put one or more papers out of business: that would mean the loss of the paper to the 75 per cent. of readers who wanted to continue to read them.

Sir Bryan's third test in regard to predatory pricing related to the intentions of the alleged predator. In this case, the predator's intentions are only too clear. As one of my hon. Friends pointed out—I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—Rupert Murdoch is on record as saying that he expects only the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and *The Times* to be in existence at the turn of the century. I fear that that was not simply a neutral, passive observation; I suspect that it is part of a strategy, and that Mr. Murdoch intends to play an active part in achieving the position to which he referred.

Paradoxically, a newspaper proprietor who insists that his editors preach competition is currently practising unfair competition. A proprietor who, through his newspapers, preaches the supreme virtue and value of consumer choice is now acting in a way that is calculated to restrict consumer choice in the newspaper industry.

That brings me to the wider points beyond the narrow issue of whether predatory pricing now takes place in the printed media. They were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who said earlier this evening that he might not speak in the debate; I am very grateful to him for changing his mind, and making some interesting observations based on long study and a deep knowledge of the issue.

Even before the recent cut in the price of the Murdoch papers, Rupert Murdoch controlled newspapers representing one third of both the daily and Sunday circulations in Britain. He also has the controlling interest in the sole satellite service, which is increasingly penetrating our television viewing figures. In terms of markets generally, the threshold that conventionally triggers an inquiry into whether a monopoly is being established is 25 per cent. Rupert Murdoch is already well over that threshold in terms of the printed media industry, and may soon achieve it in terms of an aggregate of the printed media circulation and television viewing figures.

This, however, is not just any market; the media constitute a particularly sensitive market. A free and open society requires free and open media which permit the expression of a diversity of opinion.

That brings me to another problem that acts as a backdrop to this exchange. I mentioned earlier that there are two requirements from our media if we are to have a

healthy democracy. First, we should have a variety of newspapers and, secondly, those papers should contain a diversity of views. There is no diversity of editorial view in the Murdoch press.

It is the same standard line—right-wing and Conservative in political views, intolerant and judgmental in social views—and it is united in a third factor which is a wild enthusiasm for Sky Television. That enthusiasm for Sky is so common and so deeply ingrained in the Murdoch newspapers that the day after he relaunched Sky Television last year produced 12 sq ft in the Murdoch press reporting the relaunch, with no fewer than five separate articles in *The Times*. I suspect that not all that was entirely the result of the free play of editorial judgment as to the news value of the event.

The question we have to ask is whether we want the market share of that single news corporation to get bigger. That is what is happening. I said earlier that, before the price cuts began, the Murdoch newspapers had one third of the circulation of the dailies and the Sundays. I have to report to the House that, as near as one can identify the figures, before the last cut to 20p in the price of *The Times*, that figure had increased to 36 per cent.

It is likely, given the momentum of the latest price cuts, that we shall shortly see the circulation of the Murdoch press rise from a third of total circulation to something approaching two fifths. Do we want that expansion and, in particular, do we want that expansion at the expense of other newspapers folding? My answer is an unequivocal no. That answer is also informed by a broad view of the need for a diverse media and of the importance of a diverse media for a healthy democracy.

It is not necessary for the Minister to embrace my prejudice for pluralism within the media as an important ingredient in our democracy. He could agree with my conclusion on the much narrower premise about what is important for fair competition. The Minister has a robust view of the importance of fair competition. He has founded an entire ideological career on the principle that fair competition gives the optimum results in terms of economic performance and consumer choice.

Very well: at this hour of the night, for the purpose of the debate, I shall accept the premise from which the Minister sets out. If that is the basis on which he has founded his ideology, he must be troubled by the behaviour of Rupert Murdoch, particularly in relation to the pricing of *The Times*, because that is unfair competition and predatory pricing, which is intended to distort the market and to force out of business other newspapers that are seeking to provide a price that genuinely reflects the cost of producing a newspaper.

If the Minister and his colleagues fail to respond to the challenge for free and fair competition, they will be making a mockery of their own free market ideology.

12.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): It is customary on these occasions for the Minister to begin by saying that he is glad to be here to have this opportunity to answer the debate. On today of all days I say that with special feeling.

I listened with interest to the speeches by hon. Members on both sides of the House, even that of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), who singled me out to chide me for displaying a lack of attention to what he was saying. I have to admit—he knows this from sitting for many months on the Committee considering the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—that on occasions when he was speaking my attention did wander.

Fortunately, his speech wandered rather more, so it was possible for me to cut in at a later stage and still pick up the same point. I do not think that I missed anything of importance in what he said. I discovered that, like Wagner's operas, his speeches had sublime moments but somewhat turbid half-hours. Nevertheless, hon. Members of both parties have made important points on what I fully accept is a matter of some importance and general interest.

To begin, it is worth pointing out that Britain has a strong national press. We have 21 national newspapers, including dailies and Sundays and, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, we also have a strong regional press. We therefore have a very lively printed medium. There is, of course, intense competition for sales and advertising revenue.

A feature of recent years has been the increase not only in competition but in diversity. I am a great believer in diversity—I wish that there were more newspapers that were kind to the Government, but I suppose that is rather too much to hope for. In the second half of the 1980s, national newspaper publishers improved their profit and loss accounts through two windfalls.

The first was the end of overmanning, which was associated with the move from Fleet street. Regrettably, I did not notice too much support for that move on the Opposition Benches. I think that that move was one of the major reasons that a newspaper such as *The Independent* was able to get going in the first place. The end of restrictive practices and the application of new technology meant that the cost of newspaper production was dramatically reduced. I welcome that, because it helps to promote diversity.

The second windfall was the emergence of colour in newspaper advertising. The hon. Member for Livingston neglected to mention the importance of advertising revenue to newspapers as a factor that will have to be taken into account in any attempt to analyse the motives of those who recently indulged in price cutting and the extent to which they seek to make up through advertising revenue the losses made on cover sales. I shall come to that issue a little later.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not doubt for a moment that the Minister's belief in diversity is absolutely sincere, because it fits in with in his other beliefs, but can *The Times* at 20p seriously be expected to make money without first killing at least one broadsheet and thereby reducing diversity? If the answer is no, is not the Murdoch policy of selling *The Times* at 20p a clear case of predatory pricing, which reduces diversity? If that is the case, and if the Minister wants diversity, why does he allow Murdoch to adopt that policy?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall not base my remarks on assumptions. Some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments and assertions might be regarded as strong, but they cover exactly the questions that the Director General of Fair Trading will consider before advising me on whether there is scope for using competition legislation to do anything about recent events. I shall deal with that point in some detail in due course, but first I revert to my introductory remarks for a moment.

[Mr. Hamilton]

In 1987, colour advertising in national newspapers was worth only £15.4 million, but in 1991 it was worth £155 million, so the increase has been substantial. Advertising now accounts for 50 per cent. of newspapers' revenue, but, in the face of competition from other media, printed medium publishers are experiencing a decline in advertising revenue, although that may be partly recession-related—it is very difficult to tell.

Copy sales—the other part of national newspapers' revenue—are also under increasing pressure. The circulation of popular dailies and Sundays is down, but the sales of quality titles—at least before the price war began—were up. Between 1980 and 1990, the combined circulation of popular dailies fell by just over 250,000, despite the appearance of the new title *Today* in 1986. Between 1990 and 1993, sales fell by a further 836,000.

We have witnessed among existing players an intensifying competition for advertising and circulation, and not many want to enter the market where ownership is concentrated. Major groups want to diversify into other areas; broadcasting has featured largely in the debate.

The greatest economic threat, but also in many ways the greatest opportunity, comes from electronic media. No doubt there will be rapid and significant changes in that respect in the years to come. Who knows whether the demand for printed newspapers will survive much longer in its present form, when people have access to news sources by electronic means?

I am no great expert on the subject. No doubt the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) and others who have spent a long time working in the production of news and in the publishing world generally are better informed than I, but I have certainly been impressed by the rapidity with which technology has transformed the life of the industry.

Opportunities undreamed of a short time ago are now regarded as commonplace. At this stage, we cannot forecast the dramatic impact that that may have on the important questions of public interest that hon. Members have raised during the debate—especially the diversity of supply of factual and interpretive news. That, however, is a wider question.

Past newspaper competition cases have been mentioned, so it may be worth my while to spend a couple of minutes on some of those, and especially to talk about Mr. Murdoch, as he has been painted as the villain of the piece in the debate, not only in the House but more widely.

When Mr. Murdoch acquired the *News of the World*, his first newspaper, he did not require consent, because he was not an existing newspaper owner in the United Kingdom. He then acquired *The Sun* in 1969, having been given permission to do so, when a Labour Government were in charge of competition legislation. Then, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) said, in 1981 he acquired *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*, and in 1987 he acquired *Today*.

In each of those cases, consent was given without a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry, because the Secretaries of State at the time—that includes not only Conservatives but the Labour Secretary of State in 1969—were satisfied that the newspaper being taken over was not economic, and that an MMC reference would have jeopardised its existence.

That is a factor that one must bear in mind when thinking about the development of ownership in the industry. Those newspapers were regarded as hopeless loss-makers that would have gone out of business but for intervention—in those cases, intervention by Mr. Murdoch, but no doubt there are other cases.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Just for the record, may I say that there was no dispute about the assertion that the *Sunday Times* was highly profitable and had a circulation above the trigger level? I do not want to go back over the debate about what happened in 1981, but that is worth saying.

Mr. Hamilton: I am simply trying to sketch in a bit of the background, so that the historians of the future will have the full picture.

In December 1990, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry decided, on the basis of the information then before him and in accordance with the recommendations of the Director General of Fair Trading, not to refer to the MMC under the merger provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 the acquisition by British Satellite Broadcasting of Sky Television, and the acquisition by News International of a 50 per cent. share in British Satellite Broadcasting Ltd.

In May 1993, after a period of public consultation, the Secretary of State gave his consent for the sale of the *Observer* to *The Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News* by Lonrho. In that case, the Secretary of State was satisfied that the *Observer* was not economic as a going concern and a separate newspaper, and that, if the paper was to continue, the sale should proceed without a reference to the MMC. The same considerations were applied in that case.

In March this year, the Secretary of State, again after public consultation, gave his consent without an MMC inquiry to two separate applications to acquire a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing plc, the owner of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*. That is the background to the current position on ownership.

Mr. Dalyell: Before we leave the background, may I ask a one o'clock in the morning question? Is there any unease—I do not put it higher—among the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues that so much of the British press and media is now foreign-owned? There is not only Mr. Black, but Mr. Murdoch and Mr. O'Reilly. I am not pointing a finger at them, but just saying that there is considerable unease among some of my colleagues about the extent of foreign ownership by people who do not have a stake in this country.

Some of us think that the European press should be European-owned. It might be sensible to talk to our European partners and to lay down some regulations, as the Americans do de facto, that the press in Europe should be European-owned.

Mr. Hamilton: Not being a xenophobe, I do not generally consider the nationality of individuals as terribly relevant in competition cases, even for newspapers, for which especially stringent conditions have to be satisfied to preserve media diversity. As the hon. Member for Livingston pointed out, the existence of conditions on nationality in the United States was not a bar to Mr. Murdoch's acquiring significant interests there. I cannot say that I share—

Mr. Robin Cook: He had to become an American.

Mr. Hamilton: That is true, but it did not stop him acquiring the assets that he wanted. The mere change of his nationality would not, I should have thought, have satisfied the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in that case. It is not terribly relevant to the questions that have been the subject of this debate about media diversity. After all, one could have a British Mr. Murdoch, who could behave in exactly the same way. Presumably he would then be subject to exactly the same strictures form the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Dalyell: My point is that, if Mr. Murdoch now applied for British nationality, the betting is that he would soon get into great difficulty with his American ownership. He cannot have the best of all worlds.

Mr. Hamilton: We are becoming increasingly Byzantine in the processes of reasoning that we are applying here. I shall content myself with saying that I do not think that nationality goes to the very heart of this debate. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood was much more concerned about what is done with the assets, in whoever's hands they may be. That is what he wants us to address as a Government, particularly in the cases before us today.

The recent background to the current price war is that the Director General of Fair Trading held a preliminary investigation, following a complaint from *The Independent* that the reduction in the cover price of *The Times* to 30p constituted predatory pricing. On that occasion, as the hon. Member for Livingston pointed out at some length during his useful speech, the DGFT decided against taking formal action, because he believed, on the basis of the information then available, that the price cut reflected a commercial decision by News International rather than predation.

He commented at the time of his decision:

"I am all in favour of price competition, but at times there is a fine line between aggressive price competition and predatory pricing."

That has been the subject of the correspondence that the hon. Member for Livingston has had, and of his arguments this evening.

Following the reduction in June of the cover price of *The Daily Telegraph* from 48p to 30p and the reduction in the price of *The Times* from 30p to 20p, the hon. Member for Livingston has argued that that fine line has now been crossed. However, that argument assumes that the actions of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* are of predatory intent towards *The Independent*. That argument requires some investigation if it is to be proved. I do not think that these questions are ever clear-cut. Certainly, as such questions depend on defining the intentions of the parties, they are always made subject to interpretation.

After the reduction in *The Times'* cover price, daily circulation increased to more than 500,000 copies. Of course, the advertising revenue of *The Times*, or at least its potential for doing so, has increased as a consequence. It is widely believed that the fall in the daily circulation of *The Daily Telegraph* to below the critical 1 million mark prompted its price cut, in an effort to boost circulation and, of course, to protect the paper's extensive advertising revenue.

It is difficult to be as categoric as the hon. Member for Linlithgow and others have been about what is happening here. Rather than Governments prejudging these issues, the appropriate mechanism for deciding whether there is a case to take further action is for the Director General of Fair Trading to conduct the investigations that he has done once before and is now doing once again in what may be the different circumstances of the later price cuts.

We have seen a Scottish price war developing more recently. News International's launch of *Scotland Today* on 18 July prompted similar activity north of the border. Originally, the title was to sell at 20p, but the *Daily Mirror* reduced its cover price to 10p for launch day; that was immediately matched by *Scotland Today*. Yesterday, both papers announced that they would continue to maintain the 10p cover price in the meantime.

The biggest selling tabloid is the Scottish *Daily Record*, which is part of the Mirror Group. Apparently, that remains aloof and continues to sell at 27p. Its record circulation is about 750,000, which exceeds the sales of all the other Scottish tabloids combined.

We have perhaps slightly different conditions in Scotland than in England and Wales, but there are marked differences between different parts of this market, both geographically and in terms of quality or tabloid. The current developments in Scotland are not subject to the current inquiries of the Director General of Fair Trading into broadsheet price reductions, although undoubtedly he is aware of them. As he is statutorily obliged to do, he keeps all markets under review.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Livingston has made representations to to the director general about the position in Scotland, but if he does so, I am sure that the director general will consider them. I am absolutely certain that the director general will read tonight's debate in *Hansard* when it is produced, and consider extending his inquiries to cover what is happening in Scotland as well. But that is a matter for him; it would be wrong for me to prejudge what he might do, as I am afraid that I do not know.

The Director General of Fair Trading keeps an eye on markets. He receives complaints, he examines the prima facie evidence, he conducts preliminary inquiries to determine whether further action is necessary, he refers cases under the monopolies provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where he believes that that is justified, and he advises the Secretary of State on remedies. At his behest, he monitors any undertakings which might be given or orders made.

The Murdoch press controls about 31 per cent. by sales volume of the newspapers in this country. That matter was investigated as part of the Commission's inquiry which took place last year. At that time, the Commission considered that that scale monopoly—any monopoly of more than 25 per cent. of the market can be investigated by the Commission—did not operate against the public interest. It may be that, in the current circumstances, the Commission would come to a different view, but that is a matter of speculation.

In answering the rather more subjective questions raised in this debate, my problem is that, as the competition Minister, I have legal responsibility, and I must be even-handed in my consideration of questions which might fall to me to decide. If I indicate that I have made my mind up in advance, or that I am partial to one party or another, any decision that I might ultimately make may be made subject to judicial review.

If, for the sake of argument, I were to decide against Murdoch's newspapers, without proper investigation and

[Mr. Hamilton]

without giving all the interested parties the opportunity to participate in that investigatory process, any decision that I made may be overturned by the courts.

Dr. Wright: I understand what the Minister has said about the need not to prejudge and the legal position, but I am not clear whether he is willing to agree with every hon. Member who has spoken, and with almost everyone else outside, who argue that, if there was doubt about the intentions behind the first move by *The Times* last year, there can be no doubt about the intentions behinds its second move, this year. As the Minister has already said, that thin line has now been conspicuously crossed. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that there is now prima facie evidence of predatory pricing, which certainly warrants thorough investigation?

Mr. Hamilton: It certainly warrants investigation by the Director General of Fair Trading to find out whether that evidence exists. That is exactly what is happening now. The hon. Gentleman is stating as a matter of opinion what he thinks is the intention behind the Murdoch policy on the pricing of *The Times*. He does not have any facts on which base that assertion; he is interpreting what has happened and applying his judgment to the reasons for that.

There is bound to be an element of subjectivity in coming to a conclusion, but I would much prefer to wait until I am advised by the Director General of Fair Trading, who will have made preliminary inquiries in the normal way. He will take a view on perhaps a rather more informed basis than hon. Members are able to take, because they will not have had the opportunity to quiz those who should give an opinion if we are to decide on a fair and rational basis. We must remember that we owe even to Mr. Murdoch the same fairness that anyone else would expect under our competition legislation in the exercise of the discretionary powers of Ministers.

I will not prejudge the issues this evening. The hon. Member for Livingston said that I am known for having a robust view of competition, which is true. I believe that competitive markets are not only the means by which we produce wealth, but the healthiest way for democratic societies to be sustained. It is no accident that diversity of opinion vanished from those countries where the economy was placed under state control and subject to political direction. I have a prejudice in favour of diversity, which is sustained by competitive conditions in the market.

I will start a general discourse tonight on competition policy and the circumstances in which I might decide that a scale monopoly or a merger might be against the public interest. That could not be decided simply on grounds of market share, because there are sometimes other considerations that should also be taken into account—for example, the threat of competition from those who may not be in the market at the moment but who might be able to enter it. If it is easy to enter a market, even a single monopoly producer may not be secure in his monopoly. The more precarious his position, the less the threat to the public.

Things are different in the case of newspapers; that is why different provisions apply to newspaper mergers under the Fair Trading Act 1973. We do not want to encourage monopolies, but to encourage and sustain diversity of supply.

On 30 June, the Director General of Fair Trading announced that he would conduct inquiries into the recent cuts in the cover price of *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Once he has completed his inquiries, he will advise Ministers whether further action is warranted under the competition legislation. I cannot speculate on the outcome of those inquiries, nor can I announce to the House how quickly he will complete them.

I can only say that my experience of Bryan Carsberg, in the time that he has been in the Office of Fair Trading, tells me that he will conduct the inquiries as quickly as is consistent with the conscientious and fair carrying out of his responsibilities under the relevant legislation. The investigation that was held in the autumn of 1993 was carried expeditiously, and I have no reason to believe that the coming one will be carried out in any different way.

As for the points made, especially by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), about cross-media considerations, I am inhibited from making much of a substantive reply because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is conducting a review of the cross-media ownership rules.

An announcement of the outcome of that review, including any legislative implications that might flow, is likely to come about in the autumn. The hon. Gentleman will not have to wait for the Government's views to be made clear. Unless there is another reshuffle and I am luckier that I was today, it will not fall to me to answer the hon. Gentleman.

I think that we have had a useful debate, even though it has not been easy for me to respond in a meaningful way to the contributions of Opposition Members.

Mr. MacShane: We appreciate what the Minister has said about the inquiry. I would like him to tell the House whether he would personally regret in six or 12 months' time—this is not really a hypothetical question—the ending of the printing of *The Independent* as a result of the price war. Will the hon. Gentleman make a personal statement?

Mr. Hamilton: I am not sure that it would tell the hon. Gentleman very much, if I were to venture an opinion upon that. I would rather have more newspapers than fewer in an ideal world. That is not the question that I shall be asked if issues are raised under competition legislation. I shall have to make a decision in a particular case.

In the earlier takeovers that I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the then Secretary of State had to come to a decision on whether what was proposed was desirable in the public interest. That would apply to the monopoly provisions of the Fair Trading Act as much as to the merger provisions. I cannot give a meaningful answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

As I have said, I think that this has been a useful debate. I am sure that the Director General of Fair Trading will have his attention drawn to it and that he will take the views of Members, as expressed in the debate, into account in coming to a decision and advising me accordingly. I am sure that hon. Members will not have to wait very long for that to come about.

Latin America

1.27 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), the Minister of State, on the Government Front Bench. I am sad, of course, that this is his last appearance in his current persona. I am sure that I speak for the whole House in wishing him well in his new pastures in the Treasury. We look forward to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) joining us in our deliberations on foreign affairs in general and on Latin American affairs in particular. I hope that he will have a long, fruitful and educative tenure in his new office.

All of us—certainly those of us who are members of the Latin America group—are grateful for the opportunity to air our concerns, interests and points of view once more. It is a happy event that this is the seventh debate of this nature. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who is the chief instigator of our group, deserves great congratulations on forming what has become a national—nay, even an international—institution. He keeps us up to the mark.

Over the past six years, most hon. Members have taken a bullish and positive view of what has been happening in Latin America: its awakening from the past and what was known as the "lost decade" of the 1980s; the casting off of the often unjustified image of unstable regimes and isolated protectionism; and the worrisome fact that Latin American countries were not as full members of the international community as we would wish them to be. All is not yet perfect; would that it were, in this country or any part of the world. Some of the problems in Latin America will doubtless be raised by other speakers in the debate, but most hon. Members have welcomed the significant progress made in the past five years or so.

The democratic process has taken a firm hold. We can all point to areas where it has had setbacks, but, with the sad exception of Cuba, the peaceful change of political power is now the norm in Latin America. It has been particularly noticeable that those democratic Governments have taken courageous decisions in the economic sphere. Even those of us in a deeply rooted, established democracy such as Britain's know that it requires political courage to take unpopular decisions.

Conservative Members have welcomed the correction of budget deficits, bringing under control the massive inflation that was a feature of the past—in some cases, it is still a feature—the reduction of protectionism and the role of the state, the promotion of free market ideas and the privatisation of the economy. As those developments are the leitmotifs of virtually all states that are moving forward in the world, as we saw most recently at the G7 summit in Naples, they are greatly to be welcomed in Latin America.

That process continues in nearly all the countries of that hemisphere. Some signs, however, give cause for concern. Those who are friends of Latin America should take note of them and, where necessary and possible, our Governments should take appropriate action to collaborate with the Governments of Latin America to ensure that those negative tendencies are checked and not allowed to damage or reverse the improvements that have been so welcomed.

The improved political position and economic situation in recent years has resulted in substantial capital inflows of some $60 billion a year, until recent months. The extent of that capital has funded the current account imbalances, and in many countries—although not all—it has given a kick start to economic development.

However, there are signs that the level of those capital inflows is beginning to diminish. The temptation for capital to move to, or remain in, the industrialised world is increasing. In February, the United States Federal Reserve increased its interest rates, and that has significantly checked US dollar inflows into Latin America. As the west European countries, led by the United Kingdom, come out of recession, the demands on capital in our own regions may have a negative effect on those capital inflows in Latin American countries. In addition, there is the rival attraction of the rapidly developing countries of Asia.

Some observers are worried that there will be another of the boom and bust cycles that have been a feature of the development of Latin American countries. Most observers estimate that there have been five such cycles since the 1820s. I believe that it is possible to ensure that we are not in another such cycle, because fundamental improvements have been made. The capital now on the whole goes, not to Governments, but to private companies—well-founded corporations, which are soundly based and exist to make a living in the marketplace. The fiscal disciplines in most Latin American countries are much stronger, and the mobility of capital and of labour are much improved.

The fundamental wealth of Latin American countries, specifically in raw materials and energy resources, is great, and can certainly continue to be developed for the benefit of the people of those countries.

However, among the negative factors in those difficult equations is the continuing low labour productivity in most —although not all—industrial sectors in Latin America. The low competitiveness of their exports is set against the great demand that is burgeoning for imports, and that is leading to trade deficits.

Another factor that causes considerable worry to all of us is the degree of wealth inequality that exists, and possibly is growing, in some Latin American countries. I came across one estimate by Mr. Alejandro Foxley, a former Finance Minister of Chile, who said that one of the crucial differences between Asian and Latin American countries rests precisely in that area of wealth inequality. He calculated that, in Asian countries, the richest fifth of society were between five and 10 times wealthier than the bottom fifth, whereas in Chile, that ratio was 12, in Argentina, 16, and in Mexico, as high as 27.

Obviously, the political significance of such inequalities as that are considerable, and could have a serious political impact. They could strongly inhibit the courageous moves that are being, and continue to be, taken to develop free markets, to let the private sector carry the economies forward. As we in this country well understand, those moves carry political, social and economic tensions. If those inequalities in wealth are allowed to get out of hand, the consequences could be serious.

The significance of the regional groups is important and needs considerably better handling than we have so far achieved in the European Union. We welcome the development of the North American Free Trade Agreement and Mercosur, the various bilateral relationships and the general reduction of tariff barriers. But it is important that those blocks do not develop into ring-fenced hostile trading blocks, with each one acting against the other.

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

We in Britain, particularly in the Conservative party, have always stressed that an important contribution that we have to make in the European Union is to ensure that the danger of Fortress Europe does not materialise. Our friends in the Latin American countries have the same responsibilities, of which they are aware. There are great opportunities, particularly for the European Union and Mercosur, to develop links. That is already happening, and I urge the Government to continue to concentrate on that issue.

Having made a macro-case, I shall now make a micro-point. One part of our trade with Latin America involves Scotch whisky—a significant and increasingly important export from Britain to Latin American countries. Venezuela is only just behind Japan as the fifth most valuable export market for Scotch, with exports last year worth £83 million.

There are concerns that in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay—where together the markets were worth more than £70 million in 1993—Scotch whisky exports face severe fiscal discrimination. In Mexico, where Scotch whisky exports earned £33 million last year, the geographical description of Scotch whisky is neither recognised nor protected. That is a sphere where Her Majesty's Government should ensure that they work hard to correct what is clearly an unfair position.

There are two other areas where Her Majesty's Government should continue to develop and improve their performance in relation to Latin America. The first involves the teaching of the Spanish language, which comes a poor second to French—the first foreign language taught in British schools. I am well aware of the practical difficulties relating to the availability of teachers as well as a number of other factors, but the teaching of Spanish should be a high priority with the Department for Education. A most welcome development over the past year has been the increasing number of ministerial-level visits by British Ministers and other political leaders to Latin American countries. The high number of inward visits of Latin American political figures into this country is also most welcome. I hope that that development will continue.

My final plea to the Minister is that he and his colleagues should reconsider a point that a number of us have made on many occasions, both in the Chamber and in correspondence. There should be another Government-sponsored conference on Latin America. The last such conference was, I believe, held in 1972. It is high time that another conference was staged, not only to bring to the notice of business men on both sides the opportunities available, but to highlight our growing political links as Latin American countries take an increasingly international role in the United Nations' activities and a number of other areas. Our cultural and historical links with Latin American countries are also long-standing.

All those matters are worthy of great attention. I hope that the new Minister of State at the Foreign Office, together with our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and Ministers from the Department of Trade and Industry, will take that on board. Britain has a long and distinguished record of links with Latin American countries. Over the last generation, those links have been allowed to fade away considerably—but not, I am glad to say, to disappear entirely. They have been diminished and weakened. It must be in our interests, in the interests of all those whom we represent in the House and, I venture to suggest, in the interests of the Latin American countries that Britain, both nationally and through the leadership we can offer many of our partners in the European Union, should give a new charge of energy and enthusiasm to our links with Latin America. I very much look forward to my right hon. and hon. Friends leading us in that direction.

1.46 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This debate is a welcome annual event. Although it is 1 o'clock in the morning here, it is only 8 o'clock in the evening in most of South America. Perhaps people there can listen to this debate live and at a reasonable hour, just as we were able to watch the World Cup at a reasonable hour.

This is an important debate. Indeed, it is important that we have this sort of discussion. What divides Labour Members and the Conservative Members who introduce this debate in most years is that they believe that democracy equals a free market economy equals privatisation equals freedom for all people, whereas we are sceptical about that point of view.

We stress the way in which the imbalances between rich and poor in most of South America have actually widened and are still widening. Absolute poverty is becoming worse. The degree of rampant urbanisation, with people moving into shanty towns, is truly frightening to perceive.

The issue that has arisen during the past year has been the desire of millions of ordinary people throughout the whole of Latin America to live in a society where their vote counts for something, where they do not have to live in fear of the military, where the police are under some form of democratic control, and where their children will enjoy an available health service and will grow up able to go to school, have an education and get some meaningful job at the end of that.

Those engaged in agriculture want to get reasonable prices for their crops. There is not much point in well-meaning politicians in western Europe and North America lecturing farmers in South America and telling them that they should not grow crops that are eventually used for hard drugs that destroy the very lifeblood of children and young people on the streets of our cities, when they are paid such appallingly low prices for maize and other crops. There is a connection between the two.

The economic event of the past year has been the establishment of the North American Free Trade Area. There will be problems for much of Latin America if it is to be cut off from natural trading with North America by the growth of NAFTA. The idea of a barrier south of Mexico through which trade with the rest of South America cannot necessarily pass contains within it the seeds of the most enormous conflicts, as does the attitude of the European Community and a number of other countries.

The signing of the GATT treaty is presented as a kind of all-winners situation, but many of believe that the poorest in the poor countries will suffer as a result because much of that treaty is designed around the needs of multinational capital rather than for social improvement and environmental protection.

It would not be right to continue the debate without at least mentioning the horrors of what is happening in Haiti,

where a democratically elected President was overthrown by the military. By whatever means, if President Aristide is restored to power, he will not be able to govern and the country will be permanently unstable until the legacy of the Duvaliers, their secret police and the fear factor is removed.

The tragedy and horror for the people on Haiti, be they those living in fear of the secret police in their own country, or those dying on the high seas as they try to escape to safety, will continue for a long time. It is to the shame of many that many countries were happy to go along with the Duvaliers' regime through aid, recognition and so on down the years.

During the past year, the most dramatic events in much of the region have been in Mexico, with the Zapatista uprising in the south. That was seen as an outrageous event by many in the world community, who simply did not understand the degree of impoverishment in many parts of Mexico. When the Zapatista National Liberation Army, the EZLN, occupied San Cristobal de las Casas and a number of other towns in the Chiapas region, it issued a statement which said:

"As free men and women we are aware that the war we are declaring is a last but just resort. The dictators have been waging an undeclared and genocidal war against our peoples for many years, wherefore we urge your full participation in support of the Mexican people and their struggle for work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence and freedom, democracy, justic and peace. We shall not cease our struggle until we see these basic demands of our people met, forming the government of our free and democratic country."

The report from which I am quoting goes on to point out that, in the Chiapas states, 66 per cent. of households lack electricity, 71 per cent. of children over the age of 14 are unable to go to school, they are fourth from the bottom among Mexican states in the percentage of households with access to running water and sewers, and the mortality rate is 94 per 1,000 live births. That is in a country that was being described by the World bank and others as on the road to economic success. It is hardly surprising that those things happened. It is interesting that, in later opinion polls throughout Mexico, what the EZLN had done in that region was supported by 61 per cent. of the popultion.

The horrors of what is happening in Mexico as a direct result of the World bank's intervention during the debt crisis of the early 1980s and now the North American Free Trade Agreement will not go away in a hurry and it might well break the stranglehold of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional on politics in Mexico. I hope that the British Government will support the sending of independent observers to watch the presidential and congressional elections in Mexico this year. It is essential that those involved in those elections understand that people from outside are prepared to watch what is going on.

I also want to draw attention to what has been going on in central America during the past year. There have been significant changes and earlier this this year a large number of hon. Members signed an early-day motion looking forward to the restoration of human rights and proper judical processes in Honduras. It was important to do that. It is significant that, on 13 April, the new President Reina of Honduras said:

"International human rights organisations have perceived that there could be threats to my government and they have denounced that situation . . . to prevent these threats being realised."

That is a cry from the heart for many within the central American region where some democracy has been restored, as in the case of Honduras.

There is still fear of paramilitary organisations and of the military as those Governments try to uncover human rights abuses. Unmarked graves have been discovered, people have disappeared and what may or may not have happened to them has come to light. The military is often virtually off the hook and able to do much as it pleases.

Although elections have taken place in El Salvador and the horrors of the civil war there have ended—hopefully for good, but perhaps only temporarily—one must question the policy followed by the United States in pouring vast amounts of military aid into El Salvador for a war that could not be won, to protect an elite trying to hang on to their power and wealth. The new Government have pledged themselves to work with the Opposition and other parties, but it is a matter of concern that President Caldersón Sol of the ARENA party was close to Roberto D'Aubuisson, who was closely involved with the death squads during the horrors of the civil war.

There is an economic base to many such conflicts, arising from the desire of the poorest people to enjoy a decent standard of living and the desire of the wealthy and powerful to hang on to their wealth and power at all costs. Traditionally, the US has supported the wealthy and powerful against the poor in that region.

In previous debates, I have often asked about Chile. Things have changed enormously there in the past few years. The second democratic elections will be held this year, and I was among the people who met a parliamentary delegation from Chile that came to Britain last week.

For all that, I find it astonishing that Chile's head of armed forces is General Pinochet, who was responsible for the deaths of at least 50,000 people in Chile. He seems to travel around the world with impunity, aided and abetted by the British Government in entering this country using false names and false passports, to buy arms here. It is disgraceful that the Government are prepared to share in such duplicity organised by the Chilean military, led by General Pinochet. He is still on his arms-buying excursions, and flexes his muscles to demonstrate what a powerful person he is in Chile.

I had the privilege of chairing a huge meeting in Manchester last month which brought together speakers from different parts of the world to examine the new world economic order and the problems that it is creating. One speaker was Marco Aurelio Garcia, international secretary of the Workers party of Brazil. He also attended a meeting in the House, and displayed an impressive grasp of world affairs.

His description of his party's programme and its hopes of winning elections later this year gives me great encouragement. He pointed out that, for all the facade and his country's brilliant success at football and wonderful cultural traditions, enormous poverty is suffered by many Brazilians. It was shown in a TV programme about Brazilian football broadcast on Tuesday, directed by Roberto Mardo.

Seventy million people in Brazil are excluded from its economy and a normal life. They have a twilight existence, living hand to mouth by scavenging, begging, prostitution and drugs. The Government elected later this year will have to confront those problems. They will be elected with a mandate to change, spread wealth, and bring education, housing and employment to the masses.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

All those aims are highly laudable. They would be difficult to achieve in any society in any circumstances, and well nigh impossible if the world community, through its financial institutions, continues the stranglehold on Latin America economies of the debt repayment system and underpricing of basic commodities.

We have, I hope, a humanitarian interest in the standard of living of ordinary people throughout the latin American continent, but we also have a vested interest, as does every citizen of the globe, in protecting the environment of the planet. The economic system that is being imposed on the poorest countries is one that quite deliberately damages the environment. There is not much point in lecturing people to defend their rain forest if we tell them at the same time that the only way out of their economic problems is to increase the planting of crops for export, knowing full well that that will be done on areas which were formerly covered with rain forest.

There are many countries and many areas in Latin America on which one could spend a great deal of time, but unfortunately the time allowed for the debate is fairly limited.

The issue of human rights and the image that is presented on our screens of the war against drugs is very real. I have no time for hard drugs in any way. Indeed, I see the horrors of their effects on young people in my community when they become involved in taking them. It seems to me that something is thoroughly wrong when the poorest people in Latin America are growing the ingredients that eventually turn up as hard drugs on the streets of European and north American cities, causing a cancer and a poison in societies at both ends.

Somewhere along the line, unnamed faceless people living in tax havens are making vast profits from that, and are laundering drug money all over the place. I certainly would not want to have any truck with those people.

We must also recognise that, in the facade of the war against drugs, in countries such as Colombia, some totally vile abuses of human rights are going on. The number of political killings in Colombia and the political violence there is truly frightening.

I have in front of me a copy of a paper from the US Committee for Refugees entitled "Feeding the Tiger: Colombia's Internally Displaced People". It contains a graph that has three factors: political assassinations, disappearances, and deaths in combat. From it, one can see that the figures are fairly static from 1970 to 1980, with a bit of a blip around 1977. From 1980 onwards, there was a massive increase in the number of political assassinations —up to 3,000 a year in the late 1980s, settling down to some 2,000 a year currently. Disappearances are rising fairly steadily, and deaths in combat are rising very rapidly indeed. Those figures represent the people who are killed in Colombia.

There are many complex reasons why people are killed in Colombia. Other figures show that, in 1988, 2,738 political, or presumed political, assassinations and 210 disappearances were recorded. In 1992, 2,315 political, or presumed political, assassinations and 237 disappearances were recorded. In addition, 1,801 assassinations with a possible motive of social cleansing were recorded. Those figures are truly frightening, whichever way one cares to look at them.

When one starts to look at what is going on there, one finds that British Gas, a privatised utility in this country, is well placed to lead a multi-billion pound contract to pipe Colombian natural gas throughout the capital—and making a great deal of money at the same time. When Amnesty International produced a very thorough report on human rights in Colombia, it met a strong riposte from both the Colombian Government and the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who was a junior Minister at the Foreign Office.

David Bull, director of Amnesty International, wrote in *The Guardian* shortly after:

"The outrage of the Colombian authorities at our recent adverts in the British press is matched by our bewilderment. As head of the Colombian Administrative Security Department (DAS), Dr Fernando Brito must be aware that there is no such international court or forum to which he could "sue" Amnesty International"—

that was after a threat to sue Amnesty International.

Mr. Bull went on to say that he would

"welcome the opportunity to have its evidence on human rights violations presented and tested before any independent body."

The Amnesty International report, entitled "Colombia —The human rights movement under siege", catalogues the problems encountered by people who have stood up for human and social rights in the country. Trade unionists have been assassinated; those who have stood up for the land rights of the landless have died as a result; and the constitution grants impunity to many of those responsible for the abuses.

Summarising recent reports on the situation in Colombia, the Inter-congregational Commission of Justice and Peace quoted these words from Amnesty International's report:

"Successive Colombian governments have largely escaped international criticism because of a skilful mix of political initiatives, public relations campaigns and the support, in the international arena, of powerful allies for whom Colombia's strategic and economic significance is of far more importance than its human rights record".

The British Government say that they are keen to increase the amount of trade with and inward investment in Latin America—interestingly, by a number of newly privatised utilities from this country—in order to make considerable profits. In Colombia, there is not just a battle between the drugs barons, but a battle against those who are standing up for human rights. Trade union leaders, social leaders, activists and others who want housing and schools for their children are being assassinated.

The British Government are also providing the military with logistical and intelligence support—as is the United States—in the guise of a war against drugs. Many in Colombia suspect that the intelligence system is being used to monitor the activities of those who are standing up for the social progress to which I have referred.

Several reasonable conclusions can be drawn from the current situation. The armed forces must act within the law, and the growth in the paramilitary forces must be not just checked but reduced; there is a great deal of illegal paramilitary action. Links between the army and the paramilitaries are suspected, and it is thought that anti-terrorist legislation is frequently used to prevent people from taking part in social protests. There are few signs that those who are guilty of these appalling atrocities are being brought to book.

I hope that the British Government will be prepared not only to recognise the existence of serious human rights violations in Colombia, but to support monitoring

exercises and human rights initiatives. I hope that their foreign policy initiative will stress human rights objectives rather than purely economic ones.

We are discussing a continent of wondrous diversity, beauty and potential. Many of its people live in terrible poverty, and much of its cultural heritage is under threat in numerous ways. We must view the world as a whole—its trading patterns, its ecology and its sustainability. I think that much of the treatment of the poorest people in South America is deplorable; we ought to participate in the development of a foreign and trading policy that takes a very different attitude to the region and its problems.

What has happened in Mexico, and what is happening in Haiti and to the poorest people in Brazil and Colombia, will be replicated throughout the continent. Although we cannot solve all the problems from here, we can at least recognise them and not always be seen to be supporting the rich and powerful against the poor and landless.

2.8 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), the distinguished chairman of the British-Latin American parliamentary group, on opening the seventh consecutive summer Adjournment debate on the important subject of this country's relations with Latin America. I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) to his last outing as Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, responsible for relations with Latin America, and congratulate him on his appointment as Paymaster General.

This has been another good year for Latin America, and in particular for Britain's relations with it. A glittering array of Her Majesty's Ministers has travelled across Latin America, which is good for our relations; it is also good for Ministers to absorb an appreciation of Latin America and take it into the heart of Government. It is a collection of countries with an educated elite that can match that of countries anywhere in the world. It is a continent with representative democracy now firmly re-established, except in the shameful cases of Cuba and Haiti, and it is a continent with growing economies. I hope that the Prime Minister will build on his recent visit to Colombia and to Brazil—the first such visit by a serving British Prime Minister—and I hope that he will build into his programme visits to other Latin American republics.

Only two weeks ago we welcomed President Wasmosy to the House and Celso Amorim, the Foreign Minister of Brazil is here now. In fact, only last Tuesday he witnessed from the Gallery the interesting spectacle of Prime Minister's Question Time. In London today we have also seen Ernesto Samper, the President-elect of Colombia. He spoke to us here, in the mother of Parliaments. This year, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has welcomed parliamentary delegations from Cuba and from Chile, with whom we have had interesting discussions.

Last year I spoke at length about Brazil, which covers one third of the area of Latin America. It is the ninth largest economy in the world and has an annual gross domestic product of $500 billion, which is three times that of Mexico and twice that of Belgium. The economy of the state of São Paulo in Brazil is one and a half times that of the entire Argentine republic. That puts that magnificent country into context.

Brazil is currently going through a major transformation through its economic stabilisation programme which was launched by the then Minister of Finance, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. It has already switched from the cruzeiro real currency, which only last April was depreciating at the mind-boggling rate of 42 per cent. per month, through the URV index to the new currency, the real, which was launched on 1 July. By the use of strong monetary control, high interest rates and supportive measures it has stopped inflation in its tracks. The new currency has appreciated gently against the United States dollar in the weeks since its introduction.

None of that can do any harm to the election prospects of Senator Cardoso who has become a strong presidential candidate for the elections due on 3 October. Nevertheless, he has a herculean task to outstrip the front runner, Luis Inacio da Silva, well known as Lula, the leader of the Workers party, to whom the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred.

Brazil may be proud of its recent democratic record. It reverted from military dictatorship to democracy without bloodshed. It went through the disillusion and trauma of seeing its first renewed democratically elected president, Fernando Collor de Mello, driven from office accused of corruption. It has seen its interim and current president, Itamar Franco, weather a personal scandal. It has been through all that without breaching its constitutional procedure. That is a proud record and we in the House must await the new president who takes office at the beginning of 1995.

I should like to draw the House's attention to developments in Argentina. We must lift up our eyes above the hurt brought about by that tragic piece of fratricide, the south Atlantic conflict of 1982. Argentina is a country akin to sleeping beauty. It has been kissed by the prince of democracy and is emerging from a 50-year slumber. I ask the House to cast its mind back to the 1920s and 1930s. Argentina was then interlocked with the economies of the British empire. British companies ran the public utilities, the meat trade and the banking. The Argentines exported their agricultural produce to Britain and we, in turn, exported our industrialised products to Argentina. It was akin to one of the great dominions. However, it was our actual great dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—which saw them as competitors and invoked imperial preference against them at the Ottawa imperial conference in 1932.

The shock of that event was like that experienced by a child rejected by his parent. It led to the 50-year trauma from which Argentina is only now emerging. It is ironic that Britain has also played a major part in that emergence by defeating the military dictatorship in the south Atlantic conflict. The 50-year trauma—mob Peronism followed by military dictatorship—had a devastating effect on Argentina, taking it from being the emerging power alongside Canada in the 1930s to the self-deprecating shadow of the early 1980s.

What a great humiliation that that potentially great country should have had the self-image of a third-world country. Not for nothing did Argentines joke bitterly that God had given Argentina its agriculture, its wine and its oil but that, to redress the balance for those riches, God had given it the Argentines themselves. It was a loss of confidence on a grand scale.

The earthquake of the Falklands conflict, the discrediting of the military and the restoration of

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

democracy did not complete the renaissance. President Alfonsin, the first democratically elected president, began the task, but it has been the unlikely figure of President Menem who has seen it through to fruition. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you remember presidential candidate Menem —the Peronist candidate—with his byzantine appearance and bellicose utterances, especially those against the Falkland Islands?

Who could have foreseen what that man would achieve? He has transformed Argentina—inflation has fallen, the deficit is being reined in, the vast inefficient nationalised industries have been privatised, foreign investment and expertise have been brought in, and the British utility companies have reinvested. Certainly, Argentine industry, which is old-fashioned and inefficient, needs investment and renewal, and there are many opportunities for this country in that process.

The Foreign Minister, Guido di Tella, is a highly impressive gentleman of world class. He has launched his "charm offensive", which is helping the wounds of conflict to heal. The House should not forget that Argentina's wounds are still painful to the touch. I hope that there will be a steady building of bridges between the Falkland Islands and Argentina, and the recent Anglo-Argentine conference in Mendoza attended by some hon. Members and others will have done much to help that process.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is right, however, to stress our dedication to self-determination and the fact that that dedication would lead us to defend the Falkland Islands should it be necessary. It is no kindness to Argentina to give it the impression that we would not back the democratic rights of the Falkland Islands should it be necessary to do so. That message should be clear.

Incidentally, the same message should be sent to Guatemala in relation to Belize—this country and, I believe, the world community, would, through the United Nations, stand behind the independence and sovereignty of Belize.

Argentina has got rid of violence—the violence to the "disappeared", the violence of abductions and that of left-wing terrorists has gone. How tragic that, earlier this month, we witnessed the bomb explosion at the headquarters of the Argentine Jewish community, in which 22 people lost their lives and 140 were injured. Apparently, the perpetrators are believed to be an Iranian Hezbollah terror team. I am sure that the House will echo the message of sympathy and support that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary sent to the Foreign Ministers of Argentina and Israel.

Argentina is again taking its rightful place in the world community. Its navy participated alongside ours in the campaign to liberate Kuwait, and its armed forces are shoulder to shoulder with ours on the green line in Cyprus. Argentine is again a valued trading and investment player and a major companion on the world stage, and we must give it our attention.

Recent months have seen the drama of the GATT agreement and the saga of the European Union agriculture and trading developments. The lesson to be learnt is that the United Kingdom and Latin America are natural allies. This country's fight for free and open trade marks us out as the Latin American countries' natural ally in Europe. Our friendships go back to the days of Canning, and of their independence struggles. Our interests run in parallel.

We cannot ask the Latin American countries—or, indeed, other developing countries—to return to democracy and to have sound economies and free trade, and then put up barriers against them. They must earn their way in the world, and for that they need markets in which to sell their goods, to earn foreign exchange with which in turn to buy our goods.

For that reason I alert the House to the growing phenomenon of protectionism masquerading as allegations of social dumping. Allegations of exploitation involving child labour, slavery, prison labour or dangerous working conditions are made against developing countries, and those are used as a justification for trade barriers. Clearly the House is against the misuse of prison labour, which we see taking place in the communist republic of China. Equally, child labour, as seen in far too many Asiatic countries, is abhorrent. However, we should not allow the allegations to cloud our judgment.

Those allegations come mainly from three sources. The first source is the extreme left, who blame all injustices on the international trading system; the second is producer interests in the industrialised world, including the trade unions; the third consists of the advocates of regional blocs, such as Sir James Goldsmith. Those are indeed strange bedfellows.

I believe that the greatest threat to our relations with Latin America would come from an introverted European Union, and the Latin American republics consequently looking inwards to a Mercosul and other sub-regional organisations, and then to an extended North American Free Trade Agreement. Such an extension of NAFTA would constitute a self-imposed subjection to a belated Monroe doctrine.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman not think that one of the many failings of the GATT deal is the fact that there is nothing in it about the rights of workers, or about protection against child labour? If we are serious about opposing the use of penal labour or child labour anywhere, would it not be helpful if such provisions had been written on the face of the GATT treaty?

Mr. Arnold: If such provisions were written in, they would hamstring many of the developing economies. It is all very well for us to parade our social consciences, but it is quite another thing if those countries cannot compete in the world. We must never forget that.

We must guard against the advocates of social dumping allegations, such as we have just heard from the hon. Member for Islington, North and also against the possibility of their winning their case in the new World Trade Organisation. Batteries of European Commission lawyers and experts are already descending on Geneva, using alleged cases of child labour, which they then take from the particular to the general, as an excuse for banning third world exports. The United States is also likely to behave in the same way.

That is a looming challenge that we must fight. Fortunately, we have an ally in Sir Leon Brittan as European Trade Commissioner. He has specifically opposed any action against social dumping when exporters have owed their advantage purely to low wages and social costs.

I shall make a few specific bids to my hon. Friend the Minister. I strongly support the call from our hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe, on behalf of the British Latin American parliamentary group, for a Government-sponsored conference in London on Latin America. That can only heighten the profile of that important part of the world.

I also support the plea by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe for greater emphasis on the teaching of the Spanish language to our young people. Clearly, with a multiplicity of countries in Latin America and elsewhere speaking Spanish, the language is important, certainly by contrast with French and even more so by contrast with German. I also put in a plea for the Portuguese language and I ask that we ensure that the setting of a GCSE examination in this language is continued.

I ask that we thoroughly review the support that we give, through the British Council, to the network of the Cultura Inglesa in so many Latin American countries. Those institutions are doing sterling work in teaching the Queen's English and British culture to Latin American young people. That does much to strengthen the cultural ties between our country and Latin America.

I am grateful for the opportunity for this seventh debate on Latin America. It is vital and we are making great progress to rekindle the warm relationship between this country and Latin America.

2.25 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I, too, am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) secured what is, by now, a traditional end of Session debate on Latin America. I am sad that this will be my last such debate before I transfer from the Foreign Office to a new job in the Treasury. However, I hope that it will not be the end of my relations with Latin America.

I have enormously enjoyed my work with Latin America over the past 14 months. It is a continent of immense dynamism, potential and diversity. I have been treated with great kindness by the ambassadors of the countries represented here and, indeed, by their Governments in many dealings with them, including when I have had to deal with some difficult and controversial matters.

In all cases, I have received courtesy and understanding, and I have always admired the professionalism with which those countries conduct their relations with us through their ambassadors and the staff in London.

There has been a lively traffic of visits in both directions over the past year. This week, to take an example, we have received here the President-elect of Colombia, Mr. Samper, and the Foreign Minister of Brazil, Mr. Amorim. Indeed, I dined with him shortly before this debate started. Both during that dinner and in the more formal parts of their visits, we carried forward our traditionally close relations with those two countries. Earlier this month, we welcomed President Wasmosy of Paraguay. There, too, we found a high degree of common accord.

It is worth noting that, in 1989, nine British Ministers visited Latin America. Last year, that figure had risen to 22 visits. We are not just continuing, but developing and enriching the ministerial relationship between our two continents.

I pay tribute here to the role of Canning house in this respect. It is always a privilege for me to address audiences there and to listen to questions, points and criticisms from audiences assembled by Canning house. I know that visitors always welcome the opportunity to make contact with British business men, academics and other politicians. As for the calls for a conference on Latin America, I should not tie the hands of my successor, but I hope that he will read this debate and the particular request made by my hon. Friends.

Relations are also helped specifically by the interest taken in Latin American affairs by hon. Members. Those hon. Members who have spoken in this debate are known for their continuing interest in the issues. That fact impresses visitors who come here; they like to know that hon. Members take not only an occasional but a continuing interest in developments in Latin America. They know well that that implies not only applause for the successes of the continent but scrutiny of its problems.

Human rights are not a taboo issue. Provided the discussion is informed and constructive, it enriches the international debate that human relations issues and allegations should be raised and discussed. In that context, I welcome the contribution from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). We all respect the knowledge that he brings to bear on the subject, as well as his genuine concerns about human rights abuses, which we recognise still occur in at least some of the countries concerned.

My final point is that, if hon. Members are considering a visit to Latin America during the recess or at any other time, I hope that they will let the Foreign Office know, so that our post out there can help to make their visits a success. Although I am leaving the Department, I intend to visit Latin America in August and September to complete a little business and to have a holiday in the region, which is a legitimate pursuit. I hope that the last 14 months have at least earned me a little recreation in the area, as well as a little more work.

The matter of trade was raised several times in the debate.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the Minister leaves the subject of human rights, I raised some specific points relating to Colombia. I asked whether the British Government are prepared to support human rights initiatives and examine seriously the situation in Colombia, because one gets the impression, from the outside, so to speak, that the Foreign Office is more interested in inward investment in Colombia than it is in looking at the human rights problems which undoubtedly are growing in Colombia, not diminishing.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I intend to come back to the issue of human rights later in my remarks. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, when President Gaviria visited us last year, when I visited Colombia and, indeed, when President-elect Samper came here this week, human rights issues were raised; our concerns were made clear to the Government of Colombia and those individuals. If I may, I shall respond later on what I consider to be a particularly important aspect of human rights in Latin America.

As for trade, hon. Members will be pleased to know that our exports to the region increased by some 27 per cent. to some £1.7 billion in 1993, and there is evidence that,

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

during the early months of this year, they increased by a further 17 per cent. Despite that, our market share remains disappointingly low, and we are working to correct that.

British industry and commerce are becoming more interested in the region. It is especially pleasing to see a number of British companies which were previously Government-owned domestic utilities, such as British Gas and the water companies, emerging on the world scene and winning contracts in Latin America in the face of stiff international competition. We and the Department of Trade and Industry are working jointly to promote trade. Eight export promoters for Latin America have been appointed by the British Overseas Trade Board and business men frequently accompany Ministers on visits to the continent.

Latin America has changed. The old development model and Government aims of closed economies, high tariffs, nationalised industries and import substitution have given way to an opening up of markets, a lowering of barriers and a welcome of investment. Most Latin American countries have embarked on privatisation programmes, many with help from British banks and institutions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe said, those economic changes are often painful. It takes political courage to undertake a programme of reform to reduce budget deficits, control inflation, get on top of macro-economic problems, as well to restructure economies. Those changes are not easy, and the fact that, in almost all cases, countries have persisted and are now seeing the fruits of their endeavours demonstrates their political maturity.

It is not, of course, an even process—some countries' rate of change is faster than that of others—and there are exceptions to the general lowering of tariffs. My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to Scotch whisky, which faces discriminatory tariffs in a number of Latin American countries. We continually point that out.

It is of almost overriding importance that our continent and the European Union maintain their world trading vocation. We must resist any temptation to live in a fortress Europe. We must be an outward-looking trading organisation, and we must develop links with Latin America generally and with the regional groupings within that continent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham also struck a correct note of caution about any attempt to use trade policy to try to force through social changes in poorer countries. That quickly becomes a form of protectionism, and it is a way of saying, "We're not going to trade with you, you are too poor." That is quite wrong and self-defeating.

Of course we are all repelled by the use of prison labour to undercut the market, and the use of child labour must be addressed through international mechanisms. When trade is used to effect such changes, it is an extremely blunt and clumsy instrument. As those countries recognise, such a policy can quickly become a form of disguised protectionism, which we will always resist.

Parallel political developments have occurred, and the establishment of civilian government is now almost universal in Latin America. If we take as a general test of democracy the three requirements of the rule of law, freedom of expression and representative institutions with free elections, those countries are democratic. It is noticeable that when they suffer from internal governmental crises, as they have done, they have recently been resolved peacefully and constitutionally.

Some of those crises have been serious, and have involved the removal of presidents, but whereas, 20 years ago, that might have led to the military taking over, now they are coped with and resolved within those countries' constitutions. The old stereotype of Latin America suffering from frequent revolutions, military dictatorships and repression is out of date.

The need to improve the quality of democracy in those countries is widely acknowledged. Democracy does not consist solely of periodic elections. In many instances, it requires the strengthening of the state and its administrative systems. That is why, in some countries, we have aid programmes that fall under the general heading of good government. Human rights abuses are still too common, and there is frequently a need to strengthen the judical and law enforcement systems. We from the outside can often assist with that.

There is a similar point to be made about poverty. We on the Government Benches strongly believe that free trade, liberalisation and market economics provide the dynamic for economic growth and are indispensable. The statist model comprehensively failed. I believe that the economic changes are irreversible.

As for the distribution of wealth, overcoming problems of poverty and ensuring that as many people as possible participate in the market, these are properly matters for the individual countries. They all require a strengthening of the administrative and legal systems, so that all the peoples of the countries that we are discussing can live under governmental systems of probity, integrity and efficiency.

We know that Colombia is a violent country. The connection with drugs money is evident. All too often, the colossal profits made from drugs overwhelm the administrative, judical and law-enforcement systems in the country. These systems are too easily subverted by the flows of drugs money. The war on drugs is an important way of preventing the spread of poisonous drugs into the rest of the world, and of enabling the Government of Colombia to deliver good government in every sense of the term to their citizens.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand the Minister's comments about the drugs war, but I was talking about the growing number of political assassinations of trade union leaders, of social protest groups and of people demanding education, health services and land reform. It seems that foreign Governments all concern themselves with the drugs war and ignore the vicious civil war that is being waged. The number of trade union leaders and political activists who have been assassinated is frightening. Surely that is something that should concern us.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The causes of violent deaths in Colombia are many and complex. Common crime is a factor. Far too many disputes are resolved violently. Far too many people own weapons and use them. There are guerrilla groups that refuse to come into the constitution to pursue their aims democratically. Drugs wars are financed by the profits to which I alluded. There are rogue elements in the security forces.

It is an aim of the Government of Colombia, and of the next president, to improve the judicial and law-enforcement agencies, the police and the army. It is the next president's aim to use his authority to improve those organisations' respect for human rights. That often means improving the pay of their employees, their discipline and their training, and ensuring that they are subject to the civilian authorities.

In Europe, we are used to human rights abuses being very much connected with the overbearing power of the state. Indeed, we have dealt with two ideologies in our continent—fascism and communism—which represented states which in many respects were too powerful. There is a difference between that and what is common in Latin America, where it is often the very weakness of states and their failure to control rogue elements in the apparatus of government that lead to human rights abuses.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: My hon. Friend is right. The problem in Colombia is the vast scale of the country and its rugged terrain. Since independence, the Colombian Government have been unable to get their civil writ to apply throughout the country in the minutest detail. We must regard the issue from that perspective, not the extraordinary perspective from Islington High street.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend gives a further illustration of the point that I was making.

May I take this opportunity to pay a personal and parting compliment to the officials and staff in the Department in which I have served for the past year? They have served me with unfailing good humour, in good times and bad. The skill and dedication our diplomats and officials in the Foreign Office are an asset of which this country should be proud.

Child Support Agency

2.45 am

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): It is unfortunate that we must have this debate, not because of the hour at which we are holding it but because many of us had hoped that, before the recess, the Minister would have made a clear statement about the changes that are so necessary in the Child Support Agency.

Given the clearly identified problems which so many constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House face, it is intolerable that nothing will be done to resolve their real and pressing problems over the next three months. We hoped that Ministers would give some hope to the thousands of families affected, especially as many of them are heading deeply into debt and face horrendous problems as those debts and related problems, such as potential repossession, pile up.

We should also recognise the varied nature of the problems and the way in which they are continuing. I understand from press reports on the Secretary of State's attendance at the Select Committee on Social Security that, in about a fifth of the cases being dealt with—an estimated 40,000 people—individuals are now in receipt of less than 70 per cent. of their income. We have been assured time after time in debates on the CSA in the Chamber that nobody was left with less than 70 per cent. of his or her income and that we were simply hearing scare stories, yet we find that a huge number of people are so affected.

We are not sure, however—I hope that the Minister can clarify the matter this evening—whether the standard assessment is bringing about that result or whether it is because of the clawing back of accumulated debt. Such debt is almost built into the system because of the delays in assessment. Even with a maximum of co-operation by the individuals concerned, that delay can run from 10 weeks to more than three or four months, so substantial debts are built up and the agency is trying to claw money back. Is that why so many people have been telling Members of Parliament over the past year that far more than 30 per cent. is being taken out of their money? Or is it because the CSA is stepping up the deduction-at-source orders and taking money directly from individuals' salaries, irrespective of the effect that it is having on their ability to pay other debts?

As a result of deduction orders, some of my constituents cannot meet their mortgage repayments and face threatening letters from their building society about the future continuity of their mortgage. I hope that the Minister will shed some light on that tonight.

It is true that we have achieved some clarification of the amount that has been collected, although, in the debate on 4 July 1994 and the Question Time before that, the figure moved around a little bit. I hope that we shall be given a clearer estimate of the amount that was collected by the CSA in the past year, although it seems as though that figure is well below target, and does not, up to now, bear especially favourable comparison with the operations of the Department of Social Security when it previously dealt with the application of recovery of maintenance. I hope that we shall obtain an idea of the figures that are involved, and also of the on-going costs—not only the set-up costs, but the running costs—of the agency.

We must welcome the fact that, in the debate on 4 July, the Secretary of State, even if belatedly, announced changes to deal with the administrative back-up. We all recognise from correspondence with our constituents and with Members of Parliament that, until then, the problems were horrendous. The sheer period of delay was extremely unsatisfactory, and made it difficult to pursue cases and to follow them up. The nature of the replies has, until recently, been fairly deplorable.

We should acknowledge that there has been an improvement in the replies in the past couple of months. One has the feeling now that one is communicating with a human being at the other end of the letter, rather than a pre-programmed computer which spent the first two pages giving one the background history and philosophy of the Child Support Act 1991, and never used to discuss the details of the case that one had raised on behalf of one's constituent. That seems to have improved slightly, and the CSA now appears to be addressing itself to the specific problems, although I know that many of our constituents continue to receive letters that are both belated and relatively incomprehensible.

Even if the administrative problems are overcome, we must recognise that the scheme is fundamentally flawed. There is also the problem that the agency and the Department seem, from time to time, to kick the ball backwards and forwards between one another, especially when issues that relate not so much to administration as to policy are mentioned. They seem, collectively and individually, reluctant to accept the real-life problems that are being created, or, if they do, it is with gradual acquiescence and after a considerable period.

Some movement has taken place, but it has taken an enormous amount of effort to obtain that movement, and many people's lives have been blighted in the meantime.

The underlying problems that confront the agency appear to stem from two factors. One factor is mentioned with monotonous regularity in debates on the subject—the influence of the Treasury, driven by the pressures resulting from the huge increase in the public sector borrowing requirement, and a desire to narrow that down.

No one would deny that the Treasury must have a legitimate interest in substantial sectors of public expenditure. The real question that arises is whether that interest has passed beyond that into obsession, and is being severely overdone to the detriment of individuals. In many cases, Ministers—not only the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), but other Ministers—when speaking about the subject, have constantly asked how much all the changes would cost to the public sector borrowing requirement. Those are legitimate questions to ask, but, by emphasising that aspect as such an overriding priority, they demonstrate that, in effect, the CSA imposes a tax—a tax that falls on specific people, and has fallen with great rapidity, causing huge increases in the amounts that are being taken from those people.

It is also clear that the initial proposals for the introduction of the CSA would have allowed longer lead times, a greater degree of flexibility and the potential for phasing in. But, under pressure from the Treasury, those proposals seem to have been put on one side, which has resulted in the enormous burdens that have been inflicted on individuals. Wiser counsel has perhaps been overcome by the pressure from the Treasury.

In the past, although not so much recently, there have also been quotations about changing the culture. They have been reminiscent of the cultural revolution phrases which

came from another angle in earlier days in the 1960s. People at that time found how difficult it was to institute cultural revolutions. While Governments may wish to bring about some changes in behaviour, they should be extremely careful about how they undertake them, the pace at which they try to implement such revolutions and the effect that they have on the individuals who get caught up in the resulting problems. Different parts of Government policy may be pulling in different directions in the cultural revolution and various strands in the Tory party may be trying to exert influence in different ways, but the victims are getting caught up in the battle.

Last year Members of Parliament found that huge increases in payments were being required. It was that factor that kicked off the main debates in the Chamber and in the country. People were particularly struck by the fact that, whereas changes in local authority taxation—which were fairly fresh in the mind then—had included provisions for transitional arrangements and financial provisions from the Government to ease the transition from one form of local authority taxation to another, there was no such remedy within the CSA legislation. The full force of the legislation fell directly on individuals—with catastrophic effect.

That was only part of the problem; the other aspect that caused, and still is causing, enormous upset was the retrospective nature of the legislation. It was not as though the Government had not been warned. From time to time the reports of the Select Committee on Social Security have been quoted in debates on the CSA. In its second interim report of 30 April 1991, the Select Committee stated extremely clearly:

"one particular aspect of the Government's plans, the intention to make the new provisions retrospective, causes us considerable immediate concern. We have therefore agreed to this initial Report to make our views known in advance of the debates on the Bill in the House of Commons."

At the conclusion of the three-page document the Select Committee stated:

"We recommend that provision be made in the Child Support Bill to take account of divorce settlements that have involved a capital settlement clearly made in lieu of child maintenance."

Apart from the overall question of retrospective legislation, which excited Conservative Members when they were in Opposition and the Labour party was in power, the fact is that a considerable number of the difficulties could have been avoided had the Government taken the Select Committee's wise words, which it did not dream up out of the air. Those words were based on the experience of the established Australian Child Support Agency which, as has been said innumerable times in the Chamber, has been far more successful than our scheme and has caused less major national upset and debate. One reason is that the scheme was not implemented retrospectively.

Many families made what at the time seemed to be prudent arrangements. Indeed, they were often advised to do so by their lawyers. Whether or not the Minister has some objections to those arrangements because of the implications for the public purse, they were perfectly legal, legitimate and sensible at the time. Now, by a stroke of legislation, those arrangements have been turned upside down. I use that phrase advisedly because it is the phrase used by so many people who have come to my advice bureaux or been at meetings that I have addressed. They have said, "Our world has been turned upside down."

Those people have been prudent, have kept out of debt and have tried to adjust their affairs as they have moved into a new family relationship. Suddenly, they find that all that is put at risk by the operations of the CSA. In many cases, people made settlements that involved transferring the house to one of the partners. Quite often, payments were also being made. Sometimes people took on the joint debts that had been incurred during the marriage. They did all that on the assumption that they would have to make fewer regular payments, but that has all been turned over and their financial arrangements turned upside down.

I accept that even dispensing with retrospection would leave some longer-term problems. For example, we clearly envisage that there would be far less likelihood of the transfer of the house and therefore the family being able to continue living in the family home—with the consequences of that on the security and welfare of the children. We also envisage that divorce settlements will be more bitterly and fiercely fought. We anticipate considerably more arguments not just about access to the children, but about who will be the parent with care because of the financial implications of that responsibility. There may be further political activity on that front. Even so, it would be at a far lower level than that we are experiencing at the moment.

We are very concerned about why the system is so inflexible. I have previously mentioned the way in which questions asked in this House, especially on policy issues, seem to be bounced backwards and forwards between the Ministers and at the Department. There is an acceptance of the system as it is rather than an examination of the problems that have been created, some of which cry out against common sense and should be resolved at a much earlier stage.

Given the changes that have taken place and the enormous range of human experience, it is inevitable that a series of anomalies will be thrown up. There must be a system to take account of those and to deal with them before people's lives are once again thrown into turmoil.

The Daily Telegraph today again raised the case of the grandparents who adopted their granddaughter to prevent her from being taken into care. I understand that the child is living with other members of the family and that her parents are still alive. However, because the grandparents took action to help the welfare of the child, the CSA is holding them liable for her support.

I have a case in my constituency where a child is being looked after by the grandmother, who has chosen to direct the CSA to one of the parents even though both of them are working. That seems to be extremely inequitable.

There is also the constantly raised question about the income of second spouses or partners. Time and again, they are told that their income is not assessed to establish how much is owed. In that case, they query strongly why they are required to give their income. It does not matter how many times they are told that their income does not affect the sum owed, nobody out there believes it.

If, as the Minister may say, that is only done for their benefit, would it not be better to make the provision of the information voluntary and so avoid a huge amount of mistrust and ill feeling? That would be a simple, straightforward measure which would help the Child Support Agency. There is no mechanism at present within the system for such a political decision. Matters are held in abeyance between the Department and the agency.

Considerable concern is also caused by the prospect of maintaining the spouse's new partner. Most hon. Members will have come across the problem caused by the break-up of a marriage, the circumstances of which do not concern

[Mr. John Spellar]

us, when the ex-wife, as it mostly is, marries or lives with someone who is or becomes unemployed, so that it then appears to the first partner that he is now having to pay not only for the children and the ex-spouse, but for the ex-spouse's new partner if he or she is on income support. That strikes people as absurd and unjust.

That leads to spousal maintenance, which causes enormous resentment. Again, we need not go into the rights and wrongs of the break-up of relationships, but if we are dealing with the Child Support Act and the Child Support Agency, we must query the inclusion of spousal maintenance. In the debate on 4 July the Secretary of State conceded that spousal maintenance was a matter for the courts and it would be better left there. The Minister shakes his head. If he wishes to take up the point, I am sure that I can quote the Secretary of State directly. It would be much better if the maintenance was strictly for the children, not for spouses. It would be considerably better if most of the money went to the children rather than disappeared in abatement against income support.

There is also considerable concern about the assessment and collection charges, particularly for those who did not request the service. The Minister must decide whether the inconvenience, cost of collect and resultant ill feeling is worth such sums of money. There is no doubt that that is causing considerable resentment.

The Minister must also be concerned at the huge amounts of arrears that many individuals are building up. Those who have never previously been in debt now find themselves in debt. As always, one of the problems is that debt becomes a multiple problem—as people fall into debt in other areas and face repossession, penalty costs and bailiffs and join the vicious cycle that we want to prevent. That requires a speeding up of the process of assessment and perhaps a re-examination of the way in which those arrears can build up.

The first key element of change is that more money should go to the children and the disregard should be reconsidered. In Australia, the disregard is far more generous and that leads to far wider public acceptability. Not only is it true that in many instances the money does not go to the children; the family is worse off as a result of money coming via the CSA because the mother often loses passported benefits.

In my constituency, a mother with three children is £15 a week worse off as a result of the money coming via the CSA and having to pay for school dinners. That is a considerable dent in the family income, resulting in real problems. We would be grateful for an indication of the amount that will go to children. The original estimate, given in the Minister's evidence to the Select Committee, was £50 million out of £480 million. A variety of estimates were given on 4 July. May we have an up-to-date figure?

I hope that the Minister will take on board the question of incurred costs, particularly in respect of travel to the individual's place of employment. They may be reflected by higher income but if there is not a similar offset, that adds substantially to the individual's CSA liability without any commensurate benefit. Also, the Australian scheme makes allowance for access. That is a much bigger country, but many people in this country are confronted by significant access costs.

There needs to be recognition of previous settlements and some phasing, to incorporate some of the huge changes. One suggestion is that after an individual has been given a notional assessment, his payments should increase £5 a week at yearly intervals. That would avoid huge disruption to people's lives and finances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has argued before for a proper appeals procedure on the lines of the Australian model, which would introduce robust common sense, which has been absent so far.

Would such changes require amending the legislation or scrapping the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Agency and devising a new Act? The 1991 Act and the agency in its current form are unsustainable and should certainly go.

3.12 am

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): We have had many opportunities to debate the vexed question of the Child Support Agency. I welcome this bizarrely late slot, and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on his persistence and staying power. I hope that the Minister will be able to give useful information before we give way to other hon. Members who are deeply enthusiastic about very different issues.

This is almost certainly the last time that I will address the House as a DSS spokesman for my party, until we return from the summer recess. I notice from today's events that not only the Department's budget but its ministerial team is expanding. The hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) has been joined by three Under-Secretaries of State—one of them in the other place. I hope that it is not tasteless to observe that there is a newly minted Minister of State. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bury, North has to be married to duty in the Child Support Agency. In the hon. Gentleman's case, no doubt, virtue will have its own reward.

The CSA has given rise to enormous discontent, bitterness and difficulties, the like of which I have not seen before in my career in this place. In the debate on 4 July, there was broad canvassing of the issues, and I do not intend to spend time going over the whole canvas.

I shall raise one or two points in short compass in the hope that the Under-Secretary will be able to help me with information and with clarification. Most hon. Members will know that the suggested sum of £310 million was raised by the agency in its first year of operation. That figure appears in the agency's annual report for 1993-94, which was published on 4 July—the very morning of the Opposition Supply day.

As the Minister will know, in a letter to the Select Committee, the chief executive of the agency produced a figure of £312 million, which is a very minor adjustment, of which I would make no criticism. I wish to place on record some of the conclusions, which I hope I have justifiably drawn, from that letter, and which will be of some interest to those following the debate. I remember that, on 4 July, I asked about the contribution that had been made by the liable relatives section. I did not get a reply, but it was a detailed point, and I recognise that, in the hurly-burly of exchanges, not every point can be picked up.

If I have understood it correctly—I say that a little tentatively, because the figures still seem to be somewhat obscure in some respects—the amount of that £312 million

that is directly attributable to the liable relatives section and to arrangements that predate the Child Support Agency was £199 million. If we take that out, we are left with a figure for the first year of operation which is directly linked to the activities of the CSA, and assessments levied by it fall to £112 million. I say this in no sarcastic or hostile way, but that seems to me to be a startlingly modest figure against all the claims that were made.

If one looks at that £112 million, one will see that something else of interest emerges, on which I invite the Minister's comments. Apart from the £199 million for the liable relatives section's activities—its continuing legacy—we also find that £98 million is accounted for by the parents with care who are drawing family credit. Those people are of particular interest, because they give rise to the £73 million, which, rather surprisingly, popped up as the amount that was being retained by parents with care.

I shall come to that in just a minute. Let us deal with the £98 million. It is extremely helpful of Ros Heppelwhite to have supplied the figures. She gives a breakdown of that figure, and says:

"Of the total of £98 million, £27.9 million offset benefit spending. The balance of £70.1 million was retained by parents with care due to the application of the disregard."

She went on to explain that.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that, or point out to me where I am wrong—if I am wrong—but it seems almost inevitable that the £98 million must also be split in terms of deciding what can be linked directly to the activities of the CSA, in the same way that the £199 million must be separated out to get the correct figure.

I put this as an Aunt Sally, but it would seem reasonable to assume that the £98 million would have to be split between the liable relatives section activity carrying on from a previous year and new assessments from the CSA, in roughly the same ratio as the £199 million to the rest of the total.

Ros Hepplewhite's notes state:

"Information is not available on how much of the amount shown in the table for Family Credit"—

that is, £98 million—

"was arranged by the CSA."

I see no reason to think, however, that that split would be any different from the split represented by the £199 million. If I am right, another £60 million or £70 million, in addition to the £199 million, is not attributable to the CSA's activities but would have been paid and collected in any event under the liable relatives scheme. If that is correct, it is possible that as little as £40 million can be attributed directly to the CSA's first year of operation.

I recognise that I have reached a fairly dramatic conclusion, but it seems reasonably logical, give or take a few million; we are talking in very large sums. When Ros Hepplewhite appeared before the Select Committee, it was put to her that effectively only £15 million—the £15 million enumerated in the appendix to the report that has just appeared—could properly be claimed as having been gathered in by the CSA. That may be a little harsh, however; the agency may be entitled to the rather larger figure that I mentioned, for the reasons I gave.

It would be extremely helpful if the Minister would comment. He has the time: he will not be howled down by eager hecklers. I hope that I can speak even on behalf of the beleaguered Liberal Democrats who are in our midst, for we all know that they are men of peace. This is important; we all want to know the definitive figure, and I think that my exposition has been reasonably clear.

Let me put my question in brutal terms: how much new money is in that £312 million? It is self-evident that we can take out the £199 million, and that we must split the £98 million: we have that on the CSA's own figures. But am I right in thinking that that brings us to a figure of less than £40 million in the agency's first year of activity? If so, is this not an extraordinary state of affairs, given the claims, hopes, expectations and trouble that have resulted from the whole operation?

Given that we can expect a considered reply, will the Minister also give us some explanation of the benefits savings? When I spoke on 4 July, I pointed out that, at that point, £310 million had been gathered in, and £418 million had been saved in benefits. I did not apologise for expressing some scepticism as to how £310 million could be translated into benefit savings so much greater than the total sum paid in maintenance.

Let me be fair to myself. I said then that I recognised that certain factors—particularly cases in which a claim for income support or benefit had been abandoned—might, by applying a multiplier, have produced additional savings to explain the more than 100 per cent. translation of maintenance paid into benefit savings. I understand that that is what happened in this instance.

As the Minister will know, the £418 million total includes the £199 million from the liable relatives total again; that must be taken out immediately. In addition, it includes what are labelled—rather mysteriously, to the layman—"non-maintenance cessations", which amount to the noble sum of £138.2 million. As I understand it, non-maintenance cessations refers to situations when benefit ceases, presumably because of the activities of the agency and its approach to the parties in the case.

I am interested because I know that there are many reasons why the claims might be abandoned, and I can quote parliamentary answers from the Minister which show that. It may be that there has been a reconciliation between the parties, or that the party who has authorised the claim has returned to work, and there is no locus for the agency to intervene.

There are a variety of other circumstances. I am not clear about the basis on which it was decided when a claim, having been abandoned, should be seen as collusive desertion or some other form of fraud. That is important, and it is clear that not all the claims could fit into that category. Many of them might be claims that would have fallen by the wayside anyway for some of the other reasons that I have mentioned.

I should be grateful if the Minister would comment on this, because those of us who are engaged in the minutiae of the issue are genuinely interested in how the split was made. If no deduction was made for honest cessation of claims, the £138 million could be an optimistic figure. As it is a key figure in terms of justifying the £418 million, we should be told how it was arrived at.

Even in cases of fraud, perhaps the Minister could say a word or two about how the benefit saving was calculated and which multiplier was applied. I am aware that the Department of Social Security uses standard multipliers, and I have no doubt that the Minister will have them at his fingertips. I am afraid that I am not as versed as the Department in that type of detail. We should know, because page 8 of the CSA's annual report says:

"Just as the nature of the work carried out by the Agency has changed in comparison with previous systems, so has the basis for calculating some of these savings, thus giving a better

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

indication of the impact of the system on benefit expenditure."

That is an extremely interesting sentence that is full of inferences and implications. However, on any reasonable interpretation, it is implying that the basis for calculating the savings in these cases has changed from that which has been used previously in similar cases. The report uses the words

"giving a better indication of the impact".

If it is more optimistic in terms of giving a higher savings figure as against what has been used previously, the House is entitled to know about it and to hear from the Minister.

I mention in passing the maintenance cessation figure of £16.3 million. As I understand it, that occurs when someone is floated off benefit; in other words, the maintenance payment is so high that the benefit claim is excluded and automatically falls. If we can calculate the figure of £16.3 million, why is it impossible to calculate the number of people involved? If we can corral the cases and quantify them to calculate the figure of £16.3 million, on that basis, we should be able to say how many people are involved.

I have asked parliamentary questions about that and I have been told—this is an experience familiar to other hon. Members—that the figure is not available and cannot be found. Perhaps the Minister can help me. If the system cannot produce the number of people in this circumstance, it seems a little odd that it can produce a total figure of £16.3 million as the proceeds of benefit saving. I do not see how we can reconcile those two points. The Minister has some time in hand, so perhaps he will say a word or two about that issue. From that flows the final category, which involves the consequential savings in housing benefit and council tax which, at more than £28 million, are substantial.

I should like to understand the figures better in order to be able to assess the £418 million. Even if we assume that the figures are above board, we must take about £199 million—almost half of the £418 million—away from what has been produced by the CSA. I concede that the CSA's report contains a coded message when it states:

"We estimate that, in total in 1993/4, the payment of maintenance exceeded £310 million in cases in which the Agency was involved. Nevertheless, it is evident that not enough of this yet stems from new arrangements, and that many absent parents were not complying in full with the assessments we made."

On a narrow inspection, and if one were in full possession of the facts, one could make a deduction from the phrase

"not enough of this yet stems from new arrangements".

Nevertheless, that is an inadequate way in which to flag up the fact that at least half the alleged benefit savings did not come from the activities of the CSA but comprised money that would have almost certainly been collected in any event with the run-on of what had been set up by the liable relatives section.

I shall deal hurriedly with a couple more points, as I promised that my speech would be of narrow compass. The Labour party has an agenda for change with which the Minister is very familiar. I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West said. There has been inflexibility, and I was especially interested in what he had to say about the collecting of information on the income of a spouse in the case where the so-called absent parent has either remarried or is living with a new partner. It seems to me that the only reason for having that information is to calculate the protected income.

I wonder whether there is not a case for saying that, as long as the people involved are aware of the protected income rules, are satisfied that they would not benefit from them and therefore do not want to provide that information, they should have that privilege. Of course, they should recognise that they have no right to complain if they then discover that, had they returned the information and used the protected income rules, they might have benefited from them. However, I am sure that, like me, the Minister is aware of many cases in which an interim assessment has had to be made. That is in no one's interest.

I reinforce another point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West. I, too, was fascinated by press reports to the effect that 40,000 of those who had been the subject of a mainstream CSA assessment were left with less than 70 per cent. of their net income as a result. That is a clear breach of the guidelines, which stipulate that a spouse should be left with 70 per cent. to 85 per cent. of net income—being left with even 70 per cent. puts one at the very bottom of what should be quite a generous range of possibilities.

Ros Hepplewhite told the Select Committee that 20 per cent. of cases fell below that level, although she said that virtually none fell below 60 per cent. However, the fact is that about one in five cases falls between 60 per cent. and 70 per cent.

We have not yet had the printed evidence but, according to press reports, the Secretary of State tried to minimise the number of such cases by saying that it was based on a rough sample, that—typically—it dealt with people who did not have second families, and that they had no or low housing costs. However, it is a serious matter.

I should perhaps wear sackcloth and ashes. Protesting groups often told me that many people were being taken below the 70 per cent. threshold, but I expressed scepticism about that. In a sense, I now feel that I owe those groups an apology, because it is clear that the number of people affected in that way is substantial.

Something must be done about that. We cannot simply wait and see whether anything comes out at the end of the day. When we are faced with such a situation, it is essential that we secure a commitment from the Government to deal with it, and to re-establish the guidelines that they originally presented as an important part of the system that they were introducing. I hope that the Minister will say a word or two, not to minimise the point but to show what he intends to do about it.

That takes me neatly to my final point. I do not want to run over the arguments for an independent appeal procedure, or for the possibility of a disregard for dealing with clean-break settlements. The Minister is well aware of that agenda; I hope that it will be part of his agenda too, and that he will consider it carefully.

May I remind the Minister of our exchanges of 4 July? I asked him whether he could

"give us any indication of any area in which he believes reform is necessary".

The Minister courteously replied:

"I shall come to that too in my closing remarks . . . because it is a serious point."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 113.]

We all know how time can overtake one when one is making a speech in this place. Sadly, the Minister did not

get round to dealing with the question or explaining what those areas might be. I do not criticise him for the omission, but he now has the chance to put it right.

I hope that he will be able to tell us the areas on which he is concentrating, and whether he accepts, as I hope he does, that there are genuine matters of concern that must be tackled.

3.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on securing the debate. As always, he made several constructive criticisms, as well as others that I consider less supportable. And, as always, I appreciate the manner in which he has put his arguments. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that developing a sustainable system for the delivery of child support is important, and that we are all genuinely trying to find our way through some difficult issues to develop a satisfactory system.

I have often explained in detail the principles that underpin the new system of assessing child maintenance, and it would stretch the patience of the House if, at this late hour, I embarked on another reassertion of those principles. I shall therefore not set them out again, but it is important not to forget that once a measure has been passed we spend much time in the House dealing with extremely detailed criticism, and may forget some of the underlying reasons for the legislation—such as the position of lone parents on income support, the vast majority of whom do not receive maintenance.

The House has touched on that subject before, but it was not raised one whit in the debate. Perhaps it is easily forgotten, and I am somewhat frustrated by the fact that in our concentration on the detailed effects of the Child Support Act 1991 and of the Child Support Agency we may forget about the other side of the coin. Other people —such as representatives of the National Council for One Parent Families—have been before the Select Committee to make that point, and there is an occasional interview on television or in the newspapers about the other side of the story.

Again, nothing has been said about that tonight. Shortage of time may be to blame; this is a late-night Adjournment debate, and it is easy to forget the people whom the system was set up to support. However, it is worth putting on the record that it remains a principal concern of mine to try to ensure that the system works for the benefit of those people and that we do not forget the injustices of the previous system, which were among the reasons for introducing the current system. I do not forget that, even if other people apparently do.

I do not forget, either, the fact that the Child Support Act was passed with the universal support of the House, as something that we all wanted to do. The need for it was recognised at the time, and I am grateful for that, but when principles are put into practice they can sometimes be rather harder to swallow. However, that said, I do not stand here tonight to suggest in any way that the system works perfectly, that there are no problems in the system and that there is nothing about which the Government are concerned.

When the Act came into operation, we said that the Government thought it right to keep any new legislation under review. That is especially true in the case of a change that has been described on more than one occasion by the Select Committee as the most major change in social policy since 1945. The Government showed faith in those remarks by ensuring that last February, after a period of reflection on the first six months or so of the working of the Act, they made changes based on their own observations and on some of the work of the Select Committee.

The changes that we introduced included, first, a substantial increase in the minimum amount of income an absent parent would keep after meeting his maintenance liability. Secondly, there was a reduction in the additional element where there was a liability for only one or two children. Thirdly, there was a reduction in the amount included for the care needs of the children as they grew older. Fourthly, there was an extension of the arrangements for phasing in the new amounts.

Information is now starting to feed through on the impact of the changes. I once again appreciated the contribution of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden, (Mr. Dewar) but I may not be able to go into quite as much detail as he would like. As he understood, we have said a number of times that it is important to look at the impact of the February changes and to trace them over a period before considering whether and what further reforms might be necessary.

Our early signs are that as many as 44,000 absent parents have already benefited from the changes to the formula. On average, liability appears to have been reduced by about £9 a week. When one bears in mind the fact that the formula was designed to increase average assessments by around £20 to £30 a week, it can be seen that the changes are not just minor tinkering but a real and substantial adjustment to absent parents' liabilities. The House will recall that, on average, figures for maintenance under previous systems were estimated to be between £25 and £30 and that the new figures were supposed to be between £45 and £50. Average liability should, therefore, be reduced by some £9 a week, which is a reasonable sign that the changes made in February had quite a considerable direct impact. It would also be helpful for the House to note that the reforms have been of particular benefit to absent parents on low incomes or with second families.

The changes have not, of course, met all the criticisms of the scheme and some absent parents continue to be dissatisfied. It is, however, important to remember that in almost every case that the Child Support Agency has handled so far, the parent with care and her children are in receipt of income-related benefit. In contrast, the vast majority of absent parents enjoy a much higher standard of living. Two points arise from that.

The hon. Member for Warley, West again made his comment about feeling how unfair it was that so much of the maintenance collected went back to the taxpayer by way of the Treasury. I have never felt that that was wrong. The House, in passing the Act, recognised that, for too long, the taxpayer had been the unwitting supporter of separations between parties in the United Kingdom. I do not believe that the House can hold to that opinion and then criticise the work of the agency in ensuring that the taxpayer sees some benefit from increased maintenance payments designed not only to secure higher levels of maintenance for the families involved but to ensure that the taxpayer is not bearing so much of the burden. Bearing in mind the difference in income between the parties, there is some equity in changing the balance, which was previously so heavily weighted towards second families.

Mr. Spellar: Does the Minister accept the point that, even if the House and the Government wanted to make that change, to make it in such a drastic way has had a devastating effect on those families? Transitional arrangements would have been a far more sensible and equitable way in which to restore the balance that the Government wanted.

Mr. Burt: The Government take the hon. Gentleman's point. That is why phasing arrangements were in place in the Act and that is why the phasing arrangements were changed in February to take account of just the situation that the hon. Gentleman describes. They were changed to ensure that where there were second families and there had been a written agreement or a previous court order, the increases in maintenance were carefully phased. That has been done and that is one of the things that has resulted in a change in the circumstances of absent parents, which the hon. Gentleman would support. Phasing arrangements have not been forgotten; they are there.

A number of matters were raised, both by the hon. Member for Warley, West and by the hon. Member for Garscadden. I shall cover one or two of them, but I shall not be able to cover them all at this late hour. I want to say something about the performance and administration of the CSA because the hon. Member for Warley, West mentioned those important points. I want to mention them too.

It is perfectly straightforward for me to tell my colleagues that I am disappointed with the administration of the agency in its first year. The report was a fair and accurate reflection of the fact that the agency, its chief executive and those involved felt that their performance had not been as good as they wished; they were up-front about that. A number of reasons were advanced for that, and I stand by them.

A new system was being set up from scratch. A number of assumptions had to be made about the operational workings of the agency and about how long it would take people to respond to the requests for information. Assumptions were also made about the ease of verification, and the like. Again, the House will know of the importance attached to verification, checking and the ruthless pursuit of accuracy on some occasions to ensure that the system works fairly on behalf of us all.

All of that has taken more time than was anticipated, and has resulted in a backlog of cases and—as most colleagues in the House will know—a backlog of correspondence, and the like. I regard some of those difficulties as being almost unacceptable to hon. Members, and I apologise. I am deeply sorry that the administration was not able to work as smoothly as we wished.

It is one thing to stand here and say as honestly and as fairly as I can that I am disappointed that the administration has not worked well. It would be another thing to ignore that and say, "Carry on, chaps. You must make do." We do not believe that that is right, and that is why we have taken steps to make changes to the administration and ensure better responsiveness. However, I warn my colleagues that there is a time lag because we are dealing with work that requires skills and trained personnel. We cannot simply draft in people and expect an immediate change in the workings of the agency. It takes time to train people and to see an improvement. I am sure that the measures that we have taken will show that.

I shall discuss in detail some of the things that we have been doing.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burt: I shall outline the changes that we have made and then give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Child Support Agency is currently putting in practice a range of measures to improve productivity and customer service. It is recruiting an additional 700 staff to work in areas where the agency has identified the need for the input of dedicated resources: reviews, appeals and customer inquiries. It is in the process of centralising the handling of incoming telephone calls by setting up dedicated call-handling sections in each of its six child support centres. These will handle all case-specific inquiries enabling child support officers to concentrate on processing their case loads. That is important.

The other week, I was in Birkenhead. The difference that call handling sections make is that, effectively, the calls that were being put through to business teams checking on the progress of cases, which disrupted that work necessarily, are now screened by telephone operators who have access to the information held by the business teams. The replies can be given, therefore, by the operators with the use of that access. That prevents calls from going through to the business teams, so they can get on with the job.

I have seen the work of the CSA centres. I have gone around on the floor and seen people constantly answering telephones and trying to deal with paperwork at the same time. I have seen the effect of that in Birkenhead and the quietness on the business team floors as they are able to do their work, in contrast with the business of the caller section downstairs. I know that call handling is just a simple, straightforward and practical thing that will pay a dividend for us all.

The CSA has established a centralised national inquiry line for the handling of general inquiries. The line will be connected to call-handling sections to allow for the direct transfer of calls between the two. It is planning to upgrade information technology support in local offices and to give local staff the facility to process case work on the child support computer system. That will increase the productivity of local child support officers and give agency managers greater flexibility.

The agency is also in the process of developing further the automation of its management information service, which already provides regular and accurate information on key performance indicators—although, as the House will know, not enough in crucial areas where the House has been asking for extra information. That is acknowledged by the Government and the agency, and the work that we are doing to improve the management system will help to answer some of the questions raised by the hon. Member for Garscadden tonight. It will also enable the agency to deploy its resources more effectively.

Finally, before I come to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), let me say that the agency is in the process of introducing a standard operational model for its child support centres based on the best practices which emerged during the agency's first year. For example, the centres are streamlining the procedures by which they liaise with the Benefits Agency, which must make some adjudication decisions at some

stage of the process, and they are standardising the way in which their debt management teams operate. It would be premature to attempt to quantify the success of the improvements and many of the measures must be fully implemented, but some changes are already noticeable.

Mr. Barnes: One problem that I have discovered is that my constituents who are being dealt with by the Belfast office seem to get different information at different stages. It is almost as though two or three different people are dealing with the files in Belfast. An instruction sent on one day may be countermanded by another sent the following day. Constituents are left confused. Even after I have written to Ros Hepplewhite and I seem to have resolved the problem, it is then handed over to Belfast, where it is not resolved immediately. It is difficult to believe that any co-ordination exists. Another problem is created by the letters that are generally sent to constituents. Those computer-produced letters are unsigned and it is difficult to discover whether different people are handling cases and dealing with them in different ways.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman is right to criticise the fact that different information is provided to constituents or Members of the House. That is wrong and I understand that the approach be should consistent. Different people handle cases at different stages because the work is functionalised during different parts of the process. While it may be possible that different people handle the same case, the same accurate information should be offered at all times and properly given.

Some of the problems are due to the fact that the agency has been set up from scratch. Hon. Members have discussed before some of the operational problems that I have been open enough to outline again to the House tonight. I ask colleagues to acknowledge that it is for the agency to improve its performance markedly to ensure that the problems that affect colleagues do not persist for too long.

I should like to put on record my great appreciation of the work done by the staff of the agency. Many cases are proceeding perfectly straightforwardly. The House will be aware that the CSA took on 850,000 cases in its first year, sent out that number of forms and processed those cases. The staff are working well and are well informed. Each of the agency's centres has a notice board displaying letters thanking the staff for their work. I will not discuss the pressure under which those staff work, but the House knows my feelings, and I know the feelings of all colleagues about the unfair pressure under which civil servants, carrying out Government policy have been placed. That pressure has not helped either. The staff are working hard and they are determined to improve their performance at all levels to ensure that some of the difficulties are resolved.

The agency is encouraged by the increased level of performance that has been achieved in the first quarter of 1994-95. More than half as many maintenance assessments were cleared in the three months up to the end of June —177,000—as in the whole of 1993-94. The number of cases now awaiting assessment is falling and more action is being taken to ensure compliance. In all those ways, the performance of the agency is improving considerably and will continue to do so.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me about what areas we might be specifically concerned. The reason that I have hesitated to pick out specific areas, and why I will hesitate again to do so tonight, is that it would be unfair for me to pick out two or three particular areas and say that we are concentrating on them. If I did that, people might say, "Oh. This is what the Government are going to do." I have already said that the Government keep the workings of the 1991 Act under review. Hon. Members have raised a number of concerns and they will know that, when the need for reform was proved, we responded in February, in good faith, with a number of changes. I ask the House to keep faith with that process again. When we say that we are keeping the entire workings of the Act under review, we mean just that—nothing more, nothing less. I know that the hon. Member for Garscadden is not being mischievous, but I will not tempted down a series of roads to suggest that we are doing one thing rather more than another.

A number of matters have emerged. As the House will know, there are answers to—

Mr. Dewar: I shall not try to chivvy the Minister out of his cautious stance. There is a difference between a Minister who says as a matter of routine that good Government Departments always keep systems under review and a Minister who has a determination to review things because there is a recognition that change is required. Can we at least have an assurance that we are watching the second type of Minister?

Mr. Burt: I have said in the past, and I have repeated tonight, that the entire system is being kept under review, and that if the need for change is proved, the Government will make changes. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman as to intent and also on our approach to these matters.

I shall move on to one or two other matters before the hon. Gentleman chivvies me for not answering enough of his questions.

Mr. Dewar: There is plenty of time.

Mr. Burt: I do not wish to take the time of the House. I know that it is anxious to move on.

First, I shall deal with the 70 per cent. issue by quoting from the basic CSA leaflet that goes out to families. It reads:

> "Absent parents who do not have other children of their own living with them will usually be expected to pay between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of this net income figure in child support maintenance."

I said in Select Committee that typically some 70 to 85 per cent. of net income would be available. I do not think that I or the Government ever suggested that in all cases everyone would be in that banding. We said that the majority would be, and that typically people would have about 70 per cent. plus of their income, but not everyone.

Hon Members are right to say that evidence taken from Ros Hepplewhite and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the Select Committee dealt with instances where the figure had gone below 70 per cent. There are hardly any cases—I think six out of the sample that was taken—where the figure has gone below 60 per cent. The majority of the 20 per cent. of absent parents who are left with less than 70 per cent. of their net income after paying maintenance are left with between 65 to 70 per cent. The reasons for that are those that were given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before the Select Committee.

Those who are left with less than 70 per cent. of their income after paying maintenance usually have low or no

[Mr. Burt]

housing costs and, therefore, a low rate of expenditure to offset against net income. They may also have several children for whom maintenance is payable. Those have been typically the cases that have gone below 70 per cent. No indication was given that everyone would be above 70 per cent. In fact, what we said turned out to be accurate. Usually, most people have 70 per cent. plus of their net income left. I note, however, the concern of the House, as does the Select Committee and my right hon. Friend.

The flexibility of the formula has been raised again. It is a central issue. The formula was introduced to try to provide a degree of consistency and stability for those making decisions in maintenance matters. We cannot have it both ways. Either we provide that degree of stability by way of a formula so that everyone knows what he or she is likely to be paying or receiving, or we reintroduce elements of discretion at different levels and thereby introduce a degree of uncertainty.

My understanding was that two or three years ago the House accepted that the discretionary system had failed those who were depending on it or paying for it. We wanted to ensure, therefore, that something rather better was in place. We opted for consistency. That is why we have the formula. Obviously, changes and adjustments could be made within the formula, and the hon. Member for Warley, West made his own selection. I put to him the same argument as I put to the Select Committee last year, which was that everyone has different priorities, so a check list can be produced in which the priority of payment to the child gradually slips lower and lower. The difficulty then is that one ends up with exactly the same system as before, in which the amount of maintenance payable to the child is less because people want other essentials to be taken into account.

The formula was constructed to try to leave about 70 per cent. of net income available for those various obligations. If we take account of more and more expenses before maintenance is calculated and then simply reduce the maintenance that goes to the parent with care of the child, the benefit to the taxpayer who must support the whole system will also be reduced. I am not sure whether that is what is wanted.

That matter triggers my memory about an issue that I did not cover when I wound up the last debate. The hon. Member for Garscadden said that I had been offensive by mentioning pet food. He does not toss such an accusation in my direction lightly, and I was so thrown by it that I forgot to return to it on winding up. I took the pet food example from a real case in which a woman had written to us—it was reported in the newspapers—to say that, when her husband presented to the court his list of essential expenses to be taken into account before maintenance of the child was calculated, it included £8 a week for pet food. I grant that that does not apply to every case, but it was not offensive. What is offensive is a system in which pet food could be considered more important, to the father or the court, than child maintenance.

I was not using the example to suggest that such an expense is taken into account in every case, and it was not de minimis, simply to be dismissed. It was an example to show that, once we begin to take all sorts of essential expenses into account, according to the individual concerned, such a problem may be encountered.

Mr. Dewar: My memory is not as good as it should be. I think that I said that the Minister's comment was described as offensive in a subsequent letter commenting on his article. I may have expressed sympathy with that view, but I was essentially quoting a letter that appeared in a local newspaper.

It is, however, unwise to use an extreme example which none of us would defend as a reason to rule out any new flexibility in the system. I object to the Minister using a hard case to support his position.

Mr. Burt: I fully take the hon. Gentleman's point, and I do not use the pet food example in that sense. I was simply reminded of it as we went through lists of expenses and thought that I would sort it out while we were here.

The point that I was making did not relate to pet food, but if more and more expenses are introduced into the formula, it is an example of the risk that we run. I recognise the concerns that have been raised in the House about travel-to-work expenses and other such matters.

I shook my head at the hon. Member for Warley, West when he was discussing spousal maintenance. Spousal maintenance is not in the formula. It is a carer's allowance, which recognises that a child cannot exist on its own but needs someone to look after it. That person may be the mother, who spends her time looking after the child and cannot go out to work or goes out to work and needs to pay for child care. Many people consider the carer's allowance to be spousal maintenance. Absent parents who feel aggrieved about it describe it thus, but it is not so described in the formula or anywhere else, so I wish that the hon. Gentleman would get off that tack.

Mr. Spellar: Could not the Minister save himself a considerable amount of trouble merely by raising the amount for individuals? After all, if a child of five needs someone to look after it, the child needs that care irrespective of who gives it. Why does not he take out that item, which causes continual major resentment?

Mr. Burt: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that, if we took out the title of carer's allowance and moved £25, £40 or whatever into the child's personal allowance, his constituents would suddenly say, "That is all right; we are not paying spousal maintenance any more", I think that he has another think coming, because it is a deeper point than that.

I will finish by doing the best that I can with some of the questions about the figures. I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Garscadden said, at 4 o'clock in the morning, about detailed figures. He will excuse me if I say that I shall have to write to him about some of them, because he mentioned some serious matters and I am anxious to be helpful, as was Ros Hepplewhite when she wrote to the Committee, and the hon. Gentleman rightly went through many of the figures given.

The £312 million represents the amount of maintenance in cases with which the CSA has been involved. It is not solely a figure of maintenance arranged or received by the agency's collection service, but includes an estimate of maintenance paid direct to parents with care by absent parents, as well as sums that continue to be paid from pre-CSA arrangements.

For many reasons, we believe that comparison between the child support unit and the Child Support Agency performance is not valid. The child support unit—the old "liable relative" staff—dealt only with clients receiving

income support, and was able to direct attention to cases where it was most likely that maintenance could be arranged. The Child Support Agency is a very different organisation, offering a service to parents on income support, including those between whom no maintenance has ever been paid, to those receiving in-work benefits, such as family credit, and to parents who receive no benefit.

Once taken on, all applications to the agency must be given equal attention, irrespective of whether maintenance will eventually be assessed. I do not believe that the old liable relative system was running down; the figures of maintenance received over the years were steadily climbing, so I do not think that that argument is proved. The hon. Member for Garscadden did not weigh too much on that.

I shall now discuss the construction of figures—the breakdown of the figures, which show £312 million maintenance collected, and benefit savings arising of about £418 million. We could go through them piece by piece, but I do not especially wish to do that for the House.

We have tried to draw a distinction between the maintenance administered by the Child Support Agency arising from pre-CSA arrangements, and maintenance and other savings arising from CSA assessments and other action. The information available to the House splits the amounts between benefit savings and maintenance collected. In some cases, it is one and the same.

For instance, if we consider maintenance administered by the CSA arising from pre-CSA arrangements, the amounts paid direct by the absent parent to the parent with care receiving income support totalled £175 million, and that was all benefit savings because that directly saved income support. Similarly, the amounts paid by absent parents through the pre-agency collection service to parents with care receiving income support was £24 million, and that was also all direct benefit savings. That is how the figure of £199 million is obtained, and that is all direct benefit savings.

The family credit figures have proved to be better, and our original estimate that about £50 million would go directly to parents with care increased as a result of the success of the family credit operation. There, the maintenance collected was £98 million, but the benefit saving was only £27.9 million, the other money going directly to the parent with care in addition to benefits, so there was a net increase in income to the parent with care. That gave a total of benefit savings of £226.9 million, compared with maintenance collected of £297 million. That all stems from the maintenance administered by the CSA arising from pre-CSA arrangements.

Let us consider the maintenance and other savings arising from the CSA assessments and other actions. Some £50 million of maintenance was directly collected, but it yielded total benefit savings of £190.7 million. The figures are available to the hon. Member for Garscadden. They were set out in the letter, together with notes. The hon. Gentleman raised a number of detailed questions on the subject. I should be grateful if I could reply to them in detail by letter—I think that that would be the best way to deal with them. It may provide opportunity for debate in the next Session so that the issues can be amplified and placed on the record if the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Mr. Dewar: I am happy with that. I shall read our exchanges and I might also write to the Minister. May I raise one general policy point? With some justification, the Minister makes great play of the family credit figures. They are useful to him because they benefit children. They do so because there is a disregard. I recognise that there is a distinction between people on benefit and people who work and receive top-up benefit. It seems that there is a lesson to be learned about the large number of children living in families on income support who are not benefiting at all. Does the Minister share that view?

Mr. Burt: I do, but the hon. Gentleman will also know that I have a strongly held view that there is a danger in introducing a disregard into the income support system. First, it would create a slightly higher hurdle for those on income support wanting to return to work—they would need to earn £5, £10, £15 or whatever more. We are anxious to reduce those disincentives to return to work; the system is designed to do so. That is why the incentive is deliberately in the in-work system.

Secondly, there is the issue of cost, which is difficult to calculate. We all know that introducing such a system would incur considerable expense. Thirdly, it would be inequitable. Some people would receive extra amounts in their income support benefit through the payment of money to which they were entitled. Other people receiving benefit simply would not have access to that extra money in the benefit system. People would soon be lobbying me and knocking at my door to say how unfair that system was and to ask why income support should not be increased to ensure that everybody benefited in the same way. There would be problems, which is why we have not introduced that system.

We have had a long discussion and I have probably taken up more time than I should have done. The subject is important, and I think about it carefully, as do the Government. I appreciate colleagues' concern about the subject and I do not wish to send them away for the recess under the illusion that we do not take it seriously. We know that other parts of the House, including the Select Committee, take it seriously.

The principles are right and are strongly supported around the House. We all wish to see a workable system. We have proved in the past that, where change is needed, we have been prepared to make it. Not every change that is suggested can be introduced—it would not be right to introduce them all. It is important to ensure that the principles survive. Some of them are hard to live up to —particularly when we say to the population at large that, through their taxes, they have provided too much by way of supporting separation agreements, and we now want to give them some relief. We have all signed up to that principle, but it is hard to implement in practice when constituents who come to our surgeries are having to pay more money. We have to stand by the principles and say that they are right.

We want a sustainable and good system of child maintenance for the future. The Government are determined to ensure that improvements in administration help to deliver that, but they are not blind to the other problems. We shall continue to keep the matter carefully under review and I have the strongest suspicion that we are likely to discuss the subject again when the House returns after the recess.

[Mr. Burt]

The allotted time having expired, the debate was concluded in accordance with MADAM SPEAKER's *statement—[Official Report, 14 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 1197.]*

Forestry Commission

4.7 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the subject of the Forestry Commission before the House rises for the summer recess. It gives me no comfort to drag hard-working Ministers of the Crown, such as the Minister with responsibility for forestry, to the Chamber. I am certain that he would have been up half the night anyway waiting for a telephone call from No. 10 Downing street, which I am sure will come sooner rather than later. It would be well-deserved if it did. As I get older in this place, I become more and more convinced of the need for radical reform of the way that we work so that debates such as this can be taken at more reasonable and social hours.

I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) and the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) who, ever assiduous, is in his place. I know that he takes a great interest in the subject. I had an interesting visit to a forest not far from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch during the European elections. The Forestry Commission workers showed me how they had managed to erect bat boxes in the trees in the forest just north of Bournemouth. I thought that bats lived in cages, but the Forestry Commission looks after bats as well as everything else—very good work it does too.

I am not offering the Minister an apology for bringing him to the Dispatch Box on this subject on this day. I applied for this slot in the Consolidated Fund debate last week, before there was any certainty that the Government would make a statement on this subject before the summer recess. I know that the Minister will say that it was expected. I accept that the statement was very full and I was pleased that it was made.

I was also reasonably well pleased with the result of the Government's review committee. Its conclusion was a victory for common sense, which was welcome. It is a pity that it had to take 15 or 16 months to reach that conclusion because it caused a great deal of uncertainty among the staff and the interest groups which were closely following what was happening and which have a direct interest in forestry.

More than anything else, what strikes me about the 15 or 16 months of consideration by the review committee was the astounding degree of public support enjoyed by the Forestry Commission, as currently constituted. I do not refer only to interest groups such as the Ramblers Association, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the well-respected and well-organised pressure groups which we would expect to be in the vanguard of an argument involving the future of the Forestry Commission and the forestry industry. The general public also took a keen and legitimate interest. That was one of the signal lessons that we should all learn from the 15 months' work of the review committee.

As the House will know, the committee's remit was to examine the effectiveness of current incentives for forestry investment and the options for ownership and management. It was invited by the Government to make proposals for change and to examine ways to improve effectiveness. It was of great interest to me that the Government's eventual conclusion was, as we learned a day or so ago, that Forest Enterprise should stay in the public sector. It

would be of even greater interest to know exactly what reasoning led the review committee and the Government to reject the option to privatise.

It will come as no surprise to the Minister to be told that there is still continuing suspicion about the Government's long-term motives. The reasoning of the review committee is an important element in the consideration of what will happen in future and how convinced the Government are of the decision that they have announced. It remains a matter of serious concern that the review committee's report is to remain available only to Ministers. Any work that costs the taxpayer as much as £833,000—which I understand to be the total cost of the inquiry—should be made much more widely available, even if not published because it may be a weighty document containing a great deal of technical information that would make sense only to Ministers. It should certainly be made available in the House of Commons Library, in the Scottish Office and in forestry offices in other parts of the United Kingdom.

If it proves to be impossible to deal with questions raised by hon. Members at this hour of the morning, I hope that the Minister will be kind enough to undertake, where necessary, to write to hon. Members with considered answers.

I should also like to know why the consultation document has been delayed another 14 days. If the review has taken 15 or 16 months, and if the Government's announcement was made public in the past 24 hours, it is incumbent on the Government to explain why it takes another 14 days to publish a document on which the consultation will be based. Printing techniques these days can turn round such documents, even in large volume, within a few short hours, never mind two weeks or more. It heightens my suspicion that the Government are still uncertain about their long-term motives in their future disposals and dispositions for the Forestry Commission.

That in turn leads to the suspicion that the Government were obliged to reject full-blown privatisation by the sustained and massive public opposition that they encountered. The Secretary of State for Scotland's statement, useful and welcome as it was, lacked conviction and had no intellectual coherence. The Government's strategy for the future is still unclear. If that is not true, it is certainly true that many questions remain to be answered. The Minister may say that that is what the consultation period is about. If so, this debate is a useful start to that process.

I welcome the decision to retain Forest Enterprise in the public sector. It would be churlish to quibble about that. But the Government still have much work to do during the consultation process to persuade the public that that is not just a temporary staging post on the way to full privatisation which might be reviewed after the next election.

I know that the Minister has been harassed almost to death on water privatisation in Scottish towns. By the end of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill Standing Committee, he was beginning to persuade me that he meant what he said. The trouble is that, while some of us consider him to be an honest man, we are not prepared to accept that position from other Ministers. However, I detect a scepticism still that this is only a temporary stay of execution. The Government still have a job to do in the consultation process if they are to win their argument.

To be sustainable, and to provide the industry with the kind of stability that it requires, we need 20-year solutions. The crop, as the Minister well knows, takes a long time to mature and planting grants and commercial decisions to plant have to be taken on a long-term basis. Any suggestion that this is a solution that will get the Government by the next few short years would not be good enough and would not meet the needs of the industry.

I was interested to hear the Secretary of State refer in his statement to the need for Forest Enterprise to be put on a more businesslike footing. I could not make a lot of sense of the sentences that followed that statement, which contained much rhetoric and management jargon about priorities, performance measures and cost and benefit programmes. It would be helpful if the Minister could give clear examples of what will be done differently when the new agency is set up from what happens now. That was not clear to me, despite my careful reading and re-reading of the Secretary of State's statement.

There are many kinds of next step agencies. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has identified about 96, so there is a range of steps towards an agency basis. The Government should and could help the discussion by making clear just what kind of agency they are moving towards.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. Does he accept that the obfuscation in the Government's report may be hiding their real intention regarding a next steps agency in that the established criteria are commercial? We and the public fear that there is an accelerated disposal programme for forestry and land. We could obtain tonight, on behalf of the public, an assurance that that is not the case.

Mr. Kirkwood: Absolutely. That is a concise summary of the next paragraph of my speech, which I can now skip. That is the crux of the matter and I hope that the Minister will say something about it.

What kind of agency is the Secretary of State's statement offering? Will it still be directly responsible to the Secretary of State as the responsible departmental Minister? There have been rumours that the Government would create three or four agencies for the United Kingdom's different constituent nations. The Secretary of State seemed to make it clear that the headquarters will not move from Edinburgh, which is welcome news. Will there be a direct link between Scottish Office Ministers and the Secretary of State once the agency is established?

The Secretary of State also made it clear that a new chief executive will be appointed. It is important to know the terms and conditions of his employment. There have been press reports that

"demanding but deliverable performance targets will be set for this new chief executive."

One great advantage of resisting the Government proposal that could have embraced privatisation is the sustained and unwavering support for the campaign by the existing body's director general, commissioners and senior management staff.

Soon, new commissioners will be appointed or appointed afresh, and the current director general is due for retirement. Significant management personnel changes are almost inevitable. The Minister and the Government will have to give assurances that there is no hidden ministerial strategy to appoint to crucial positions particular persons with a hidden agenda, with the objective of ultimately moving towards privatisation or—as the hon. Member for

[Mr. Kirkwood]

Dumbarton said—commercialisation in a way that would compromise other roles in the multi-role forest context and framework that we seek.

Will the new chief executive's terms and remit be made public before he is appointed? What thought has been given to what exposure the new agency will have to market testing exercises, which are being visited on many other next steps agencies? It is important to have answers to those questions so that the consultation process may proceed in an orderly and properly informed fashion.

As to the Borders district and south of Scotland region, which the Minister knows well, I am convinced—because I know the work that they do—that the people running that district and region under Mr. Gordon Cowie and his team need no lectures on improving efficiency. The 43,000 acres of Forestry Commission land that they oversee are managed extremely well. They run a tight ship, and it is hard to see how the new trading standards, arrangements or bodies that the Government propose will help those individuals to do their jobs any better in future than they have done them over the past 10 or 15 years. There has been a significant change in the way in which the commission has operated in the Borders forest district. It has been some 15 years since proper, full-time staff were appointed in any numbers. Local experience recently has seen much more insecure seasonal work introduced on a contracted, self-employed basis, with a steady erosion in the number of full-time jobs.

But for all of that, the Borders forest district makes an annual surplus in the region of £500,000 to £600,000. It is coherent in what it does. It has a good rapport with the local community, and management and staff work extremely well together. I cannot for the life of me see any obvious way in which increased efficiencies could be made. It would be a foolish person who said that no improvements could be made. I think that it does a good job and in a dedicated fashion.

The Minister will also know that the industry produces direct and indirect employment for thousands of his constituents as well as mine across the Borders region as a whole. It is a very significant industry in local employment terms. Indeed, I think that it would be safe to say that, short of the north of Scotland forestry region, the Borders and south of Scotland regions must have the most significant input of any forestry industry in any other part of the country in terms of its local economy and the contributions that it makes to the income and expenditure in the south of Scotland.

What procedure will be required to implement the new agency? Again, the Secretary of State's statement left important questions unanswered. Will the consultation document, which we are expecting in a couple of weeks, contain details of the precise steps that are necessary to create the new structure? If primary legislation is not necessary—I understand that that is so—will we have a chance, through statutory instruments or Orders in Council, to scrutinise or sanction what is eventually proposed? That is an important question.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds pointed out that, from previous procedures in creating the agencies, it envisages the whole agency being generated by the publication of a framework document. Will full details of any such document be made available during the consultation so that we can see what procedures are to be used to set it up? Will Parliament get a chance at any stage to look at the remit, objectives and, crucially, the performance targets that the agency will be invited to address?

In all of that procedure, what is there to provide any degree of accountability other than that through occasional requests to visit and give evidence to Select Committees and the like? What transparency will there be, for example, in the hierarchy between Ministers, the chief executive and Parliament?

I press the Minister on the meaning of his desire that Forest Enterprise should have a more commercial attitude. What implications will that have for research? I know that there are worries that some of the research functions—I know that some of them are carried out by the authority, not the enterprise—will go to the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology. There is also concern that the more commercial attitude will have an impact on the valuable interpretation and educational work that is currently done by Forest Enterprise. One thing that I discovered while increasing my education about bat boxes was the very valuable role that is played by Forest Enterprise in holding the ring between conflicting and competing users of forest land. Some of the fragile heath land that the Forestry Commission looks after in areas around Christchurch and Bournemouth was beginning to come under pressure from orienteering. That was in conflict with the conservation interests about some of the species that were under pressure. The Forestry Commission was the only institution capable of resolving in good faith some of the conflicting and competing uses of the areas of fragile heath land in its charge. It is feared that, if Forest Enterprise adopts a more commercial attitude in the future, all the valuable roles that it now plays will be sacrificed.

If the new agency is given genuine flexibility to retain all the surpluses that it would gain from disposal, and the finance that it needs to be able to acquire substantial tracts of land as well as disposing of forestry land and estates, that will be very welcome: it will make the agency much more efficient, and promote multi-purpose forestry. But if increased commercial pressure amounts to nothing more than losing public benefits, stripping out amenity developments, imposing higher charges on the public for services, reducing the percentage of broadleaf planting or more and faster disposals, the new agency will rapidly lose the critical mass that is necessary for it to retain its crucial role as a forestry leader.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton made an important point about commercial objectives. It would be regrettable if they began to override environmental objectives; that would affect staff morale, and the new agency would simply bring about the death of Forest Enterprise by means of a salami technique—death by a thousand cuts.

I am sorry that nothing more definite has yet been said about the disposals policy that is to be handed to the agency for implementation—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): It has not changed.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is interesting. We have heard all sorts of rumours, but I think we can all agree that some 180,000 hectares have been sold since the early 1980s. There is a rumour that 100,000 hectares will be required to be disposed of by the year 2000; indeed, either the

Ramblers Association or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds mentioned 37,000 hectares annually. If the Minister is really saying that nothing has changed, I think that we should have a discussion. The consultation period should be used as an opportunity to press the Government to clarify their plans.

All the small parcels of land that can be disposed of easily have already been sold. Any reactivated disposals policy would mean wholesale blocks of established forest being put on the market. As the hon. Member for Dumbarton will probably know better than me, the Kilpatrick Hills area just north of Glasgow has been talked of as a major disposal. Indeed, the whole of Upper Nithsdale, much closer to home in the Minister's patch —he shakes his head—has been mentioned in terms of marketing in the recent past. If the Treasury targets are too strict in future and the new agency is given no flexibility, other forest areas will have to be sold to meet arbitrary financial targets and for no other reason.

I remind the Minister that the sub-committee of his own review team that looked into the question of access for the public concluded:

"As the disposals programme proceeds it will be necessary for the Forestry Commission to identify for disposal a greater number of woods with higher levels of existing access".

That key question will have to be considered during the consultation.

The £4 million extra in grants to be made available to the private sector is, of course, welcome and necessary, but I was interested to note Tilhill's response to the Secretary of State's statement:

"The Statement wishes an end to the decline in conifer planting. We do not think conifer planting will increase from the present level as a result of this Review. This means that the UK forest output will not be sustained as timber volumes fall after the next twenty years."

That is an important reaction, albeit initial, from a serious player in the forestry game. The Government should view it with some interest.

I want to make two short points about grants. The new agency must be set clear targets and be given a clear steer in terms of what it does with the consultation processes that have to be undertaken with local communities before large blocks of monoculture sitka spruce are planted. There is a fear that some of the new grants will provide planting of commercial conifers on sensitive upland ground.

The environmental panels have been working well and the environmental impact statements are addressing many of the concerns that were evident four or five years ago. However, there are remaining fears that in some parts of the Borders at least the forest plantation is obliterating archaeologically important sites and destroying the quality of the border hillside. If the agency is not made aware of that and does not take proper account of it, it will cause concern in areas such as southern Roxburghshire.

The new grant regime does not provide enough scope or incentive for integrated farm forestry schemes. I know that the farm woodland scheme has been quite successful and has made some progress in promoting broadleaf amenity woods, but there is very little commercially viable timber production. I urge the Government, during the consultation period, to consider carefully providing a lead and a proper system of grants that would make it worthwhile for upland farmers—relatively small-scale farmers, not just big estate owners—to plant commercially viable holdings.

Although it is welcome that the short rotational coppice has been given some assistance and recognition under the grant scheme—there was a sentence or two about it in the Secretary of State's statement—I am a little worried about the reduction in planting grants for short rotational coppice on non-set-aside land. It is fair to say that the production of power from biomass, including short rotational coppice, is still an infant industry. It is nearing commercialisation, but it is in need of pump-priming finance to see it through its formative years. The Secretary of State's statement did not persuade me that the Government are doing enough to address the extent of the problems.

I make no apology for leaving the question of access to the end because it is probably the key question motivating most of the public who will take an interest in the consultation process. I detect considerable disappointment at the lack of real progress on access. The Secretary of State said that the Government wanted to

"strengthen the arrangements which are available to protect existing access".—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1994; Vol. 247, c. 178.]

That is a meaningless statement because the current arrangements are non-existent. The Government's own research by the sub-committee on access concluded:

"Even with improvements the existing arrangements cannot be made effective in protecting continued public access."

That is right and it is important that the Government know that.

Only two days ago I received a letter from Mrs. Ann Fraser. She is a serious person and is the Scottish access officer of the British Horse Society. She lives in Jedburgh and she has helped me enormously with continuing correspondence about the problems of equestrian access to forests. I declare a non-pecuniary interest in this. It was a painful interest at the Hawick common riding because I came off at full tilt in one of the first fields at the Moss Paul ride out. When I get the time, I enjoy access to Forestry Commission forests on horseback.

Mrs. Fraser is at pains to point out in the letter dated 18 July that there is a current argument about Spottiswoode at Westruther in Berwickshire where about 50 horses currently use the area. The forest is owned by the Forestry Commission and on two occasions the wood has been offered to Borders regional council under the continued public access guidelines, giving it the opportunity to get the management procedures in place for continued public access after a sale. Both the offers have been declined by Borders regional council. The Minister may say that that is because of the legal expenses and that that has now been addressed by the Government.

However, the problem is worse than that because, as the Minister knows, public access guidelines do not cover horse riding. Such activities, which take place exclusively and expressly with individual permissions, do not fall within the scope of normal public access agreements. That is a matter of some concern in an area such as the Borders, which has a great interest in equestrian activity. There are about 100 horses in the Spottiswoode forest. Indeed, at Westertoun, Mr. and Mrs. Isles run an excellent trekking and equestrian business for locals and visitors, and that is exactly the type of business that might be prejudiced if we do not sort out the issue of access.

During the consultation process, we have to ask the Government what will happen if local authorities do not or cannot make access agreements when sales are contemplated. The system has not worked until now, so why should it work in the future? What will happen if a local authority does not enter into an agreement concerning

[Mr. Kirkwood]

woodland that it has been proposed should be sold? Will continued access be at the whim of the new owner, or will the woodland be withdrawn from sale?

Where will the £1 million needed to buy the leasehold interest come from? Will it have to come from increased disposals or from the Treasury? Will the money to be spent on the central Scottish woodland, to which the Secretary of State for Scotland referred, come from increased disposals or from the Treasury? These are important questions, and the Minister would do the consultation process a considerable favour if he answered them, if not tonight, by correspondence.

The Government should now produce a national forestry strategy, including wildlife, access and environmental targets, which would map out the positive future which the forestry and woodland industry deserve and which the public demand.

4.46 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on securing this debate, but I must say that I was not flushed with excitement when I was told that it was to take place at 4 am. However, the debate is pertinent for a number of reasons, not least because the Government have this week issued a statement on forestry. I shall concentrate on a few matters: first, the history of the interdepartmental group; secondly, the disposal programme; and, thirdly, access agreements, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

A number of points arose from the statement made the other day by the Secretary of State for Scotland. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is deplorable that the consultation document was not issued at the same time as the statement. I was informed on Tuesday morning that the statement was not in its final form but was being hastily rearranged—that is perhaps proof of the lack of clarity in the Government's approach to the whole issue.

Will the Minister tell us how long the consultation period will be? Will he answer the query from the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire about the interdepartmental review group document? Why, after £860,000, I think, was spent on it, is the document not to be published? How transparent are the aims and objectives of the next steps agency?

I said that I would deal with history, so let us go back to the previous general election. On 3 April 1992—six days before the election—the Prime Minister sent a letter to the forestry unions' action group. He wrote that there was

"no intention to privatise the Forestry Commission."

On 11 May 1992, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), told the House:

"We have given a firm commitment not to privatise the Forestry Commission."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 470.]

However, on 5 July of the same year the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), wrote a confidential letter—I have it here—to the Secretary of State for Scotland in which he revealed that privatisation was being actively considered. He wrote:

"I am inclined to favour option two in the Forestry Commission paper, despite the difficulties to which you"—

that is, the Secretary of State for Scotland—

"referred in your February letter. Although there would be hurdles to overcome, the key benefits are that it would raise money and get the forest estate out of the public sector . . . I would also like to suggest that if we decided to look into the option further we should go on to consider the possibility of abolishing the Forestry Commission in due course, and absorbing the forestry authority's policy functions into the Agriculture Departments".

It transpires that, at that stage, apart from the ideological reasons, there was a purely financial reason for the sale, and there was also a bit of empire building for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which is not universally known as a guardian of the wider public interest.

As a postscript to the Prime Minister's letter to the forestry unions, on 27 August the Prime Minister's office sent another letter, correcting the April letter and explaining that

"the commitment given by the Prime Minister on this matter was drafted incorrectly during the frenzied activity of the general election campaign."

That shows that whatever the Conservatives say in their manifesto they can change a few months later. My goodness, how many times have we seen the Government do that over the past few years?

All that led to the setting up of the interdepartmental review group of officials on March 30, to

"review options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands and to make proposals for changes".

When I mentioned the desire to dispose of the Forestry Commission and take it out of public hands, I think that I heard a Conservative Member murmur, "Hear, hear." But in Scotland as well as in the rest of the United Kingdom there was a massive outcry against the Government's proposals. I see the campaign that has forced the Government to back down from their naked objective of securing privatisation as a victory for public campaigning across all parties and all interest groups. That is most important.

I shall quote just one individual on that subject—Mr. Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington, a friend of the Minister and other Members of Parliament, who is chairman of the Red Deer Commission. He had the interests of the land in mind when he said:

"This may be public suicide. I may be sacked to-morrow"—

that is, from his chairmanship of the Red Deer Commission—

"But the Government is talking rubbish about privatising the commission. What is going on is ridiculous, a struggle for power, political dogma . . . We have to say loud and clear that we don't like this dogma, that we won't have it pushed down our throat and that our political administrators need a psychiatrist . . . Selling off assets is a funny way to run a country".

Those words were true then, and they are still true now. Selling assets is indeed a funny way to run a country—and we are still faced with the same problem.

I hope that I shall not do the Minister any political injury when I congratulate him on his stewardship of the Forestry Commission over the past year. I know that he realises the benefits of retaining the Forestry Commission in public hands and I know that a rearguard action has had to be undertaken by the Scottish Office on the issue.

After the statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland on Tuesday, there was considerable relief that the Government have had second thoughts about the wholesale privatisation for a number of reasons. However, the Scottish public and the United Kingdom public still have

many pertinent questions to ask about the present situation. There is still suspicion that forest management will be based solely on narrow commercial principles and that that may yet lead to the planting of more blanket swathes of conifers. There is also concern about the private ownership that has become an increasing feature of forestry over the past 11 or 12 years, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said. Land disposal has taken place and more than 25,000 acres have now been sold in Scotland.

From experience, we know that private ownership frequently leads to a denial of access. The Forestry Commission has previously been criticised, but during my visits to, and discussions with, conservation groups, recreational groups and local authorities, they have pointed to the fact that, especially in the past decade, the Forestry Commission has proved much more astute. It has learnt to serve the needs of industry without alienating the public interest. It has adopted a proper and responsible attitude to community, recreational and environmental interests. Tree planting is nowadays undertaken in sympathy with the lie of the land and broadleaved trees, such as oak, ash, rowan and birch, which are traditional species in the Scottish forests, are introduced to soften the geometrical patterns of the land. A lot of good work has taken place, but we must remember that 250,000 acres of forestry land could be sold off by the end of the century.

The Secretary of State for Scotland could be described as Britain's head forester because he is in charge of the forest portfolio throughout the United Kingdom. The Scottish Office has an extremely important role to play. There is still a robust role for it in fighting against the disposal of land. There must be resistance to the Treasury's wish for a quick profit from the sale of valuable estates over the coming years.

Although this is, I imagine, the first time that the Government have backed down over privatisation in 15 years, we still have to strike a note of caution because, although the statement by the Secretary of State on Tuesday was welcome, a number of issues are still of great concern to us. Let us consider his comment that

"Our conclusion is that, at this stage of their development, the Forestry Commission woodlands should remain in the public sector."

Why in the name of goodness was the phrase

"at this stage of their development"

put into the statement? One can only surmise.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State answered that point yesterday.

Mr. McFall: The Secretary of State did not answer satisfactorily. That is the whole point.

Sir Hector Monro: That is a matter of opinion.

Mr. McFall: I agree that it is a matter of opinion, but I point out to the Minister that no Opposition Member believed that the point was answered. It is clear from the newspapers today that few members of the press believe that the point was answered. When the Secretary of State said:

"at this stage of their development"— [*Official Report*, 19 July 1994; Vol. 247, c. 177.]

did he mean that, two or three years down the line, the Forestry Commission will be reviewed again?

Earlier, I quoted the Minister saying that the Government had no intention of privatising the Forestry Commission, yet they set up an interdepartmental review because of the pressure from other Departments. There was pressure from the Department of the Environment and from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, among others. The Minister cannot sit there, even at 4 o'clock in the morning, and deny that. I congratulate him on resisting the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment and the Treasury. What concerns the Opposition and other people is that that resistance will have to be maintained.

In the statement, the Secretary of State also mentioned that a trading body would be established as a next steps agency and would deal at arm's length with other parts of the Commission. We know the situation with regard to other bodies which have been established as next steps agencies to "deal at arm's length". What that means in parliamentary terms is that when a Member of Parliament writes a letter, instead of a direct answer from a Minister, there is a response from a chief executive. All we have to go on is that simple answer from the chief executive; we cannot probe or clarify the aims and objectives of the agency and the criteria on which it is operating. That gives us no element of succour in terms of the Secretary of State's statement.

The Secretary of State also referred to the Forestry Commission meeting legal costs incurred by local authorities in making access agreements. That is a totally inadequate response to the issue of access agreements. It is still the case that if land is sold and put into public hands, access agreements are not established. If I understand the Select Committee's report on forestry correctly, it mentions one access agreement in England and Wales but no agreement in Scotland, so effectively no access agreements have yet been established. It is a bit simple and superficial for the Secretary of State to say that giving the Forestry Commission some resources to meet legal costs will overcome the issue of access agreements because the problem is much greater than that. We need much more information on that issue.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned the disposal of land. It is a fact that land has been disposed of since 1981. Over the past decade, there has been a campaign to stop the sale of forest land. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned that more than 8,000 acres of land in Upper Nithsdale near Sanquhar in Dumfries—the Minister's area—have been disposed of. Further disposal was stopped only after successful intervention by the Ramblers Association working in co-operation with local community interests. The land would have been sold but for the fact that the local community got together and campaigned against it.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned Kilpatrick Hills, which I know extremely well because most of the 4,000 acres which are about to be disposed of are in my constituency. Much of the land encompasses the Loch Lomond area. Although the Government established a working party to examine the issue of the conservation of Loch Lomond and planning for its future, and although the report of Sir Peter Hutchison's working party stated that its understanding from the Scottish Office was that there would be no disposal of land in that area until the Secretary of State had come back with a statement as to the future of Loch Lomond, the Government have allowed the Forestry Commission to go ahead with the sale of 4,000 acres of that precious land.

In another area, delay in doing something about Loch Lomond is doing little for the environment or for public

[Mr. McFall]

safety. The Government have an obligation to come out with a definitive statement on the issue. The sale of the Kilpatrick land involved 4,000 acres of precious Forestry Commission woodland. Again, a local campaign was taken up when it was discovered that Cluttons of Edinburgh was selling that land. I shall quote from a memorandum from Dawn McNiven of the Forestry Commission in Edinburgh to Bill Wright of the Ramblers Association in Scotland. It says:

"You asked for a written note on the above"—

Kilpatrick Hills—

"Owing to the failure of four of the five lots to achieve a satisfactory offer, we have decided to temporarily withdraw all five lots of woodlands from the market.

The sale aroused considerable public comment, and this may have had an effect on potential purchasers. We intend to bring the woods back to the market once conditions have changed."

I assure the Minister that if that happens, public opposition will be maintained so that we keep that land in public ownership.

In the past couple of years, the Minister has engaged in double-speak on access agreements. On 29 January 1994, the Minister was interviewed on Radio Scotland about Forestry Commission woods—at a far more civilised time between 7 am and 8 am—and he stated:

"I think the point you are really making is that those that have been sold to individuals or to private companies with a binding agreement on access, I think in truth the law cannot be continued to a second purchaser."

The interviewer went on to ask:

"So the first purchaser at the moment can make a very quick profit by selling it on to a chum somewhere down the line?"

The Minister replied:

" That would be possible, yes."

Sir Hector Monro: But very improbable.

Mr. McFall: The Minister said:

"That would be possible, yes."

For the past 15 years, I have kept a close eye on the Government and such a reply is as good as them accepting that that could happen. The Minister has therefore acknowledged that if a second purchaser takes over woods, access agreements cannot be guaranteed.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is being rather unfair. He should quote from the rest of that interview, in which I explained carefully that the whole purpose of management agreements with local authorities is that they last in perpetuity. It is important to reach such agreements to ensure that the legal problem of access is not encountered on the second sale.

Mr. McFall: I am grateful to the Minister for that clarification, but if the individual who purchased the land wished to sell after six months, no one could stop that person. The Minister has now told us that no public access agreement can be guaranteed. At the moment, the Forestry Commission operates a right-to-roam policy and the public make 50 million visits a year to its land. If the piecemeal disposal programme continues, the issue of public access will become an issue of ever-greater importance to the public, because they will understand that, progressively, they may be denied access to the hills.

The Minister has offered us no comfort, particularly when we consider that no access agreements have been signed between a local authority and a private landlord. On Tuesday, the Secretary of State failed to respond to that issue, which is still to the fore in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has already referred to multi-purpose forestry. In August, when the opposition to the Forestry Commission sell-off was at its height, I was invited to visit the Caledonian Paper Mill Company's plant at Irvine. That company has made a £250 million investment in Scotland and employs 430 people at the plant. It was concerned about long-term stability in the forestry and wood processing industry. That company and other industrialists told me that the Forestry Commission should stay in public hands because no long-term guarantee of supply could be offered if woods were in private hands. Whether one is talking to recreational, environmental or industrial groups, the message is the same: it is important to the keep the Forestry Commission in public hands.

Last year, the Labour party undertook a forestry privatisation survey and contacted every local authority in the United Kingdom. There was a 100 per cent. response from Scottish local authorities. They were unanimous in their belief that privatisation was not the way forward. The Dumfries and Galloway regional council, which has responsibilities in the Minister's constituency, responded as follows:

"Privatisation would be damaging to the nation's economic interests as well as placing at risk current public rights to access and recreation."

Even in the area that the Minister represents, his words on access do not ring true. The council continued:

"There might also be damage to local processors, mainly saw mills, if they are to rely on future supplies from multinational companies with purely commercial objectives. The present continuity of supply would certainly be threatened."

Every local authority in Scotland said that it wished the Forestry Commission to remain in public hands.

The need for a long-term policy for forestry is extremely important. After all, an oak tree that was planted in 1919, when the Forestry Commission was founded, will even now barely have reached middle age. We are one of the least afforested nations in Europe. There is only 10 per cent. woodland cover in Britain, with 7 per cent. in England. Our European partners have an average of 25 per cent. The need to continue to pursue the current long-term strategy is extremely important.

The Royal Scottish Forestry Society, in its submission to the review group and in criticism of possible privatisation, said

"that sudden change for political or other reasons forced onto an unwilling organisation would cause instability to both private and State forest enterprises."

The society set out its concerns about the long-term disruptive effect on the forestry staff—their recruitment and training—and said that a

"piecemeal 'sell off' would be the worst of all worlds, with loss of jobs with a complete disruption of the woodland market, resulting in only the best forests being sold at 'rock-bottom' prices."

We ask the Minister to take into account this wise counsel about piecemeal sales. Despite the Secretary of State's statement on Tuesday, the issue has not been addressed. It will result in a severe problem in future.

The Conservative party's 1992 manifesto gave a clear promise to guarantee public access to a forest when the land was sold off. As with all its manifesto commitments, nothing could have been further from the truth. We were told by Ministers at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Food that further restrictions to Forestry Commission land would be fiercely resisted. In the light of the Under-Secretary's remarks, the only way to resist further restrictions to public access is to bring an immediate end to the Government's policy of back-door forestry privatisation.

I join the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire in pressing the Government on the issue. The Secretary of State's statement on Tuesday was far from reassuring. Pertinent issues remain to be considered. The Government are backing down on the privatisation proposal but they have done little to reassure the public that their long-term intentions are good.

5.14 am

Mrs. Diana Maddock (Christchurch): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for initiating this important debate. Like him, I would welcome reform of the procedures of the House so that we did not have to debate such matters at 5 o'clock in the morning. I must be well and truly sucked into the system to be standing here now.

The Forestry Commission's future is a subject close to my heart and the hearts of many of my constituents. Some 12 per cent. of my constituency of Christchurch, in east Dorset, is Forestry Commission-owned land and the New Forest is on our doorstep. When I was elected last year, I conducted a survey among my constituents and found that a large majority of them regularly walk in our local woodlands. That is not surprising given the wealth of opportunity that we have to do that locally, with Ringwood forest, the Moors Valley country park, Hurn commons and part of the Avon valley in the area. All those places are owned by the Forestry Commission, so it is understandable that I feel so strongly about this issue.

Like many other hon. Members, I listened with interest to the Secretary of State for Scotland's statement on Tuesday. The news that the Forestry Commission would not be privatised was hardly Westminster's best kept secret; it had been announced on the television news and in *The Times* in May, and in *The Scotsman* in April. Nevertheless, I was relieved to hear the Secretary of State confirm it in the House, and the 4,500 people in my constituency who signed a petition against privatising the Forestry Commission feel likewise.

The decision not to privatise the Forestry Commission is wise. The future of our woodlands does not lie in the private sector. The delicate balance between the commercial use of forestry, the public right of access and environmental protection and conservation can best be kept by a body that is publicly owned and accountable to Parliament and the public through Ministers. In contrast, a Forestry Commission plc would be accountable primarily to its shareholders, whose interest in the land would be overwhelmingly commercial. Without all-encompassing regulation and strict control, which would be impractical and make the commission unattractive to investors, the profit motive would run rampant over the public interest and the delicate balance that now prevails would be lost, possibly irretrievably.

I know from first-hand experience how that delicate balance between the different areas is kept. I visited the Moors Valley area in my constituency and was shown round by two members of the Forestry Commission staff. One who was interested in conservation showed me the work that the commission was doing in bringing back Dorset heath land, which is an important natural habitat. It was also impressive to go round with the employee responsible for the commercial side and see the tremendous pains to which the commission has gone to protect the environment at the same time as selling off our woodlands.

Despite the Secretary of State's announcement, the future of the Forestry Commission and the land that it currently owns is still a matter of great concern to me. The implication of his remarks on Tuesday was that privatisation was by no means ruled out as an option for the future. Indeed, when questioned, the Secretary of State said that there was "no intrinsic reason" for Forestry Commission woodlands to stay in public ownership.

The decision to turn Forest Enterprise into a next steps agency could be regarded as a staging post towards privatisation in the future. Even if it is not, the Secretary of State admitted that the new agency would be "at arm's length" from the rest of the commission. As has already been said, it will become even harder to hold the Forestry Commission's management wing accountable to Parliament.

The Secretary of State also said that there will be demanding but deliverable performance targets. That sounds as though the Government will demand profit and the agency will deliver land to the private sector to get it. Will those performance targets include targets for levels of public access? Will those performance targets include targets for the preservation of animal habitats, and rare species and plants? That is especially important in my constituency, where there are Dorset heath land areas. Will those performance targets include targets for the planting of deciduous trees rather than the block planting of conifers, which are often preferred by the private sector because they are more profitable, but add to acid pollution and often destroy wildlife habitats? I strongly hope that the Minister's answer to all those questions will be yes, and that the Government performance targets are not simply profit targets.

I know that the forestry industry is an important one for much of Britain, and I fully realise that the commission plays an important economic role in many areas. Nevertheless, there is a balance to be kept between that role, and access and conservation, which up to now has been kept fairly successfully. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure me and other hon. Members and our constituents that performance for the Forest Enterprise agency will mean very much more than simply how much money can be made out of our woodlands, and that any "targets" that it is set will take those points into account.

The Forestry Commission has an admirable record on conservation. My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned his visit to a neighbouring constituency of mine, and he told you about bat boxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the Forestry Commission has also been involved with bird boxes. However, my hon. Friend did not tell you about the bumble boxes to be found in Wareham forest, in an effort to save the British bumblebee.

The commission also has a good record on public access, and I make no apologies for making similar points about that. That is the issue about which people are most worried. We know that, when woodlands are sold off, access is almost always lost. In spite of the Government's much-trumpeted initiatives in 1991 to try to protect access,

[Mrs. Diana Maddock]

I have been informed that only 19 agreements have been obtained from a total of 544 sales in the two years after that. Public access has been lost to 83,700 acres, and that can be added to the 345,000 acres to which public access had been lost in the previous nine years.

I welcome the fact that the Government have now recognised that that state of affairs cannot continue. I look forward to studying the promised measures when they are at last published. I hope that there will be great encouragement of public access when the commission disposes of its land.

When I read the document that we hope will arrive soon, I shall be especially interested in the proposals on how we shall pay the costs of public access. I say that as someone who came to this place from local government. I know too well the way in which local government may be promised help to pay for things, but cash does not always arrive. Permission may have been given to borrow, rather than money being forthcoming. I welcome, however, the fact that the Government recognise that it is important for local authorities to be involved in that, and I would back them whole-heartedly on that.

The most unfortunate fact is that, while the forestry review group has been sitting, while the Government have been considering its findings, while they have been producing a consultation document that we have yet to see, and while they consult on it and finally implement any changes, new woodlands are being put on the market. In the next 12 months, a further 25 acres are scheduled for disposal.

I ask the Government, why is that being allowed to happen? They are allowing it to happen in the full knowledge that people will lose the right of access to that land. I believe that the Government should halt the sales until new measures are in place, so that we do not lose any more access. I should very much like much more openness to surround sales of Forestry Commission land. It is difficult for ordinary members of the public to find out what land is on the market.

The piecemeal sell-off of much of the Forestry Commission's land is happening at a time when there is an expanding demand for timber world wide that we should be helping to meet. The Government's grant proposals show that they have recognised that, but, as I think we have all said this morning, the need to maintain access is becoming more and more important because the amount of leisure time that the average person now enjoys has greatly increased. We are all aware of the importance of woodland to the global environment, especially in our hydrological cycles and in combating global warming. Our forests are one of our greatest natural assets, and the Forestry Commission is the guardian of many of our most precious woodlands.

Many people will have been encouraged by the Secretary of State's statement, but we now have to see if the detail in the consultation document matches up to some of the expectations that have been raised by that statement. My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I will be looking hard at the consultation document. I know that my constituents will be looking at it very closely. I hope that the Minister will take a hard look at the submissions that come in during the consultation process.

I shall end with a few words for the Minister from one of my constituents. She speaks on behalf of the Verwood and district rambling club. Verwood is quite a small town in my constituency, but nevertheless the rambling club has 140 members. The letter was sent partly in response to a letter sent to me from the Minister which I sent to my constituent. She was not too happy with the initial letter, and said in her letter:

"I trust my suspicions are unfounded and that when the statement is issued we will find that common sense prevails.

This land belongs to the people. Let's keep it that way."

5.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I am glad to respond to the debate, and am only sorry that Opposition Members have left me so little time to do so.

The House will be aware that the Secretary of State for Scotland made a detailed statement on Tuesday in which he outlined the Government's approach to forestry in the light of their consideration of the forestry review group's report. I think that it received a general welcome from hon. Members on both sides of the House with the exception, surprisingly, of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). He attacked what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said, but seemed to be totally out of step with almost everybody else in the House. However, I believe that his conscience may have made him realise that there was a great deal of good in what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said.

I appreciate the situation as well as many and probably better than most because my constituency is one of the most afforested areas in the United Kingdom. I have a high regard for the Forestry Commission and its staff, as well as for the private forestry groups that are equally important in providing timber for the long-term future. It is important to realise, particularly when we consider the planting grant increases that we announced on Tuesday, that we are concerned to ensure that there is an adequate supply for the major processing plants that have developed in the United Kingdom, especially in Scotland, in recent years. As the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) said, those plants are anxious to have long-term contracts. I hope that they will be able to achieve that under the plans that we have announced. In Ayrshire, Inverness-shire and Stirlingshire there are processing plants of immense importance, not only because of their products, but because they provide employment, often in areas with relatively sparse opportunities.

This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the commission, and it is appropriate to begin by considering its achievements. Opposition Members have tried to spread alarm and despondency tonight. Many of the issues they raised were hypothetical and far from what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said or what is intended.

Planting by the Forestry Commission and its support for private sector planting have resulted in the level of forest cover in Britain being doubled to reach 2.2 million hectares, more than 10 per cent. of the total land area. Wood production from the commission's forests is now more than 4 million tonnes a year, up 60 per cent. since 1980, with a further 50 per cent. increase expected by the year 2005. That wood production now supports many jobs in the wood processing sector. Over the last few years processing has enjoyed new investment of more than £1

billion. Examples of that are Caledonian Paper, Iggesund in north-west England and Shotton Paper company in Wales.

In addition, we should not forget the sawmilling developments. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has some in the Borders and I have some in my constituency. They are often located in small communities and thus provide an important boost to rural employment.

Under the Government's approach of multiple-purpose forestry, the commission's work is not simply restricted to wood production and encouraging investment in timber processing. Its responsibilities also include its important work in recreation and conservation. It is estimated that about 50 million people visit the commission's forests each year. It has developed an impressive range of facilities for visitors, including 671 picnic places, 751 forest walks and nature trails—those of us from Scotland well know the Southern Upland way and the Queen Elizabeth way—and a large number of cycle trails, visitor centres and forest gardens. The commission also operates a successful holiday business renting out forest cabins and providing camping and caravan sites.

I would not want to miss out the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) from my remarks. I can confirm that the Forestry Commission is extremely interested in conservation of all sorts. I know Canford Heath, Verwood and the other areas she mentioned. Many of them are sites of special scientific interest—especially Canford Heath—and are therefore protected. The commission takes a great interest in habitat, conservation and the encouragement of all sorts of wildlife. Those who last night heard my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins)—the Minister for the Environment and Countryside—talking about our future plans for conservation will know that he highlighted all those points and stressed how important it is to look after our countryside.

Not surprisingly, an estate of more than 1 million hectares is a key national resource for nature conservation. The commission's nature conservation initiatives include 400 sites of special scientific interest, which cover 80,000 hectares. There are also the habitat projects, 250 wildlife rangers and forest design plans to co-ordinate production conservation and recreational uses.

Last but not least, the commission is custodian of some of the great British forests such as the New Forest and the Forest of Dean, which are linked to great events in our history and whose continued maintenance and development provide a tangible link to our past.

I must put on record a response to some of the points raised. It is wrong to say that the Government have done a U-turn. It is difficult to get into the heads of some Opposition Members that a consultation period means just that. We set out all the options and, having listened to all the arguments, we reach a conclusion. I find it incomprehensible that Opposition Members jump to conclusions before they have consulted. They were exactly the same on the issue of water. They said that Scotland's water would be privatised. We are not privatising Scotland's water; it is remaining in the public sector. Nor are we disconnecting supplies to domestic premises.

Mr. Kirkwood: Publish the report.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman shouts from a sedentary position. He knows full well, because he must have heard the reason a thousand and one times, why the Quayle-Monro report is not being published. It is exactly the same with the report of the forestry review group. Hon. Members should understand that papers containing commercial judgments are not and never have been published. The hon. Member for Dumbarton loves dishing out confidential documents, as he did tonight, but I cannot comment on them. The hon. Gentleman should have a greater sense of responsibility than to proceed by leaks.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire made a constructive speech. The details of the agency will be spelt out in the consultative document that will be published shortly. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no accelerated programme of disposals. He should know that we started out with the intention to sell 100,000 hectares and we are almost halfway towards achieving that and expect to do so by the year 2000. There is no intention to increase that figure.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said time and again that now that we have considered the access issue and received the report of the access sub-committee, which I accept was disappointing, we shall be careful about what parcels of forest are put on the market. Sensitive areas and areas that are used frequently by the public will not be in the disposal programme unless we can obtain an access agreement from the local authority. That is why we have put £1 million into the proposals that we announced yesterday—to assist with the legal charges and other aspects and to buy out the leasehold of Forestry Commission woodlands that are subject to leasehold and so not free for access as the rest of its woodlands are.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a helpful answer. From where does the £1 million that the Minister has just mentioned come? Is it a Treasury grant, or will it come from the Forestry Commission's own resources?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman can work it out however he wishes. It will come from the trees that are sold and less will go to the Treasury. It will go to the operations to help with access and the grants, which is an important issue. Less money will go to the Treasury and more will be put back into the Forestry Commission, either through planting grants to the private sector or towards making access more available.

Mr. McFall: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I have only four or five minutes, so I must hurry on.

I welcome what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said—after all, it is his debate—about the South of Scotland Conservancy Council and Mr. Gordon Cowie, whom I know well and who is doing an excellent job. That is why I am so pleased that the Forestry Commission is staying as it is with the addition of the next steps agency in order to increase the commercial aspect of the enterprise. The authority will carry on looking, as ever, to be more efficient and to include the scientific aspects that have been mentioned.

Interestingly enough, I went recently with Gordon Cowie to south-west Scotland to see the devastation of plantations by fire. That is a serious issue that we must consider. Half a million pounds worth of timber is burnt in a day, some by vandals and some by careless walkers in the

[Sir Hector Monro]

woods. We must be careful about that in the spring when there is little green cover and the timber is particularly dry, as it was in May this year.

I have said how proud we are of SSSIs, which are important to the Forestry Commission. There is great co-operation between Scottish Natural Heritage, English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Forestry Commission. All work well in harmony. It is interesting how they are developing their work together.

The hon. Member for Dumbarton mentioned Loch Lomond and safety. We put into the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill the very issue that we are trying to achieve of speeding up the by-laws for water sport.

Mr. McFall: As to Loch Lomond, I mentioned the possible sale of 4,000 acres of Kilpatrick Hills. Sir Peter Hutchison's report, which I welcomed, referred to the disposal of land in the Loch Lomond area. Perhaps there could be a moratorium until the Secretary of State makes up his mind. Will the Minister consider that issue and write to me?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes. I indicated that careful consideration will be given to putting on the market areas of sensitive planting—and nothing could be more sensitive than the area around Loch Lomond. That is also true of the Kilpatrick Hills, where there is also a significant problem of access to extract the timber if it were sold. That is also on the back burner.

We must maintain a modest disposal programme to generate income to continue the Forestry Commission's overall business. We must not forget that it was established to provide sufficient timber for all sorts of purposes in this country, not for purely environmental reasons. I am glad that has developed because it is important that trees are matured and that we now have fine woodlands throughout the United Kingdom.

The House will have to await publication of the consultative document in a few weeks' time for much of the detail. There will be adequate time—at least until the end of October—for consultation and for people to give their views, if they differ from the document. We will listen adequately and carefully, as we did throughout the progress of the forestry review group. I must have written 1,000 letters to Members of Parliament on access. Of course I was aware how strongly they felt. In the same way that we listened in respect of water in Scotland, we listened carefully in relation to forestry and made the right decision. I was pleased because I think that it is the right way forward. I look forward to the results of the consultation document, so that the commission will know that it has a stable, long-term future—as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said when answering questions on his statement last Tuesday—and will not feel concerned about any of the scares—

The allotted time having expired, the debate was concluded in accordance with MADAM SPEAKER'S *statement—[Official Report, 14 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 1197.]*

Air Pollution (London)

5.42 am

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment, although I dare say that he could think of more joyful starts to his new job than addressing a cold and empty Chamber at 6 o'clock in the morning.

Twice in the past three weeks the Department of the Environment issued poor quality air alerts as photochemical smogs descended on many parts of Britain. The most recent case was Tuesday 12 July. Before that, peaks occurred over the weekend of 2 and 3 July. In London —the worst-hit area—ozone levels reached 95 parts per billion. According to the Department's health panel, they should average no more than 50 parts per billion.

That weekend, according to *Today*, hospitals reported a 20-fold or 30-fold increase in admissions of patients with breathing difficulties. Some hospitals in London and the south-east were so overloaded that they were running out of medicines to treat asthma sufferers.

It is ironical that those two poor air quality alerts coincided precisely with the inquiry into transport-related air pollution in London by the Transport Select Committee, of which I am a member. They were not without precedent. The most notorious air pollution incident in recent times was the photochemical smog in London on Friday 13 December 1993. Professor Ross Anderson of St. George's hospital conducted an investigation into the incident for the Department of Health. He said:

"The death rate in London during that week was 10 per cent. higher than expected—equivalent to about 160 extra deaths."

There is now good medical evidence to suggest that increases in air pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and particulates—known as PM10s—are associated with the worsening of the symptoms and the number of attacks experienced by individuals with asthma and other respiratory disorders. And asthma is on the increase. Indeed, it is the only treatable chronic condition in the western world that is increasing in frequency and severity. The Government's figures published in April of this year show that levels of asthma have more than doubled in every region of England since 1979. Some 3 million British citizens now suffer from asthma. Some 2,000 people die from asthmatic attacks every year—with 80 per cent. of those deaths thought to be preventable. In total, there are some 100,000 hospital admissions for asthma each year. It is now the greatest single cause of hospital admissions, after heart disease and strokes.

The national asthma campaign has drawn our attention to the anomalous position whereby this major and treatable source of ill health in our society was not included in the Government's "Health of the Nation" strategy, published in 1992. Paradoxically, however, the Welsh Office has set targets for the reduction of asthma in the Principality. I very much hope that, as a matter of urgency, the Government will draw on the Welsh model and include in their "Health of the Nation" strategy targets for the reduction of asthma deaths and hospitalisations as well as for the management of asthma in schools and the community.

Such a development would certainly be more than welcome in the London area, for in the South West Thames regional health authority area, which covers part of London, the incidence of asthma rose by 164 per cent.

between 1979 and 1991. I am bound to say that those striking statistics are borne out in my own direct experience of case work in my south London constituency of Streatham. Indeed, so impressed was I by the number of parents referring to their children's asthma condition that I carried out a survey of the incidence of asthma among pupils at local primary and secondary schools in Streatham earlier this year. Sixteen of the 22 schools responding reported an increase in asthma over the past five years. In some cases, head teachers referred to dramatic increases over that period.

I am, of course, fully aware that the medical evidence, such as it is, points to the source of asthma in allergic reactions to such materials as pollen and household dust. Nevertheless, I am bound to say that I consider it more than a coincidence that when Friends of the Earth carried out a seven-city survey of nitrogen dioxide levels in the UK in 1992 it found that the worst residential site was in Streatham—with a mean level of 58.5 parts per billion. The European Union's upper safety limit is 40 parts per billion.

That monitoring exercise was carried out in the very heart of Streatham, at St. Leonard's junction, on the A23 London to Brighton road, one of London's busiest and most congested thoroughfares. The simple fact is that road vehicles are the main contributor to air pollution in urban areas; and they are overwhelmingly the source of air pollution in London. In London, road vehicles have been estimated to contribute 75 per cent. of nitrogen dioxides —which also play a major role in ozone formation—some 95 per cent. of black smoke and virtually 100 per cent. of carbon monoxide.

In other words, if we are to improve air quality, to improve the condition of those with respiratory illnesses and, in practice, save lives, our overwhelming target must be the motor vehicle and the internal combustion engine. It is on the premise that the internal combustion engine can be cleaned up that the Government's response to the problem of air quality in London primarily depends.

Since the end of 1992 all new petrol-engine cars have been fitted with catalytic converters, although that still applies to only about 5 per cent. of cars on Britain's roads. Other European legislation, actual and anticipated, will have a marked impact on medium-term emissions of toxics from motor vehicles. Even on the most optimistic estimates, however, the impact of those measures will not be fully felt for another 10 to 15 years—not until the year 2010—and even those measures, which are intended to produce cleaner engines and fuels, throw up their own difficulties, contradictions and disadvantages.

Let us take catalytic converters, for example, and the problem of cold-start emissions. Catalytic converters do not function properly until they are warmed up, and they do not warm up until they have travelled 10 miles. Until that point, they produce more pollutants than traditional engines. Three quarters of car journeys in London measure just over six miles.

When conducting its air pollution inquiry, the Transport Select Committee received deeply alarming evidence on the possible effects of the high aromatics content of unleaded petrol. Unleaded and, to an even greater degree, super-unleaded petrol have been promoted as "green" fuels; yet, especially when used in non-catalysts, aromatics in petrol lead to emissions of carcinogenic materials that may be causing an increased incidence of cancers such as leukaemia. In the United States and Germany, steps are already being taken to limit levels of benzene and aromatics way below British standards, although those countries use catalysts far more than the UK.

Only two years ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer cut the price of diesel relative to leaded petrol and gave fleet car owners a tax incentive to run diesel cars. Diesel cars were deemed to be the "green" cars: more fuel-efficient, and a force against global warming. Now, however, new evidence of the link between particulates —PM10s—and mortality and morbidity have led the Government to decide that a precautionary approach, to use the technical expression, is needed.

A recent Department of the Environment report suggested that diesel vehicles account for some 30 per cent. of PM10 emissions from all sources. There is, to say the least, a question mark over the diesel engine. Let me add this, however: the London bus may be diesel-fuelled, but, while its seating capacity gives it an efficiency of at least 300 passenger miles per gallon of fuel compared with 20 for the private car, there is no doubt that the environmental advantage continues to lie with the London bus.

I have not cited those examples to mock, or to argue that the search for a cleaner, more efficient engine is a worthless endeavour; on the contrary, I have cited them to demonstrate that there is no guarantee for Londoners of a seamless progression to better air quality by the year 2010. The same development may remove but also create pollutants; there are no guarantees.

In any event, no one has seriously argued that it was ever possible to create an entirely clean, green internal combustion engine. That would be a contradiction in terms. But any improvements that may result from the introduction of catalytic converters will be progressively offset if individual car usage continues to grow on the scale predicted by the Government.

Six years ago, the Department of Transport's national road traffic forecast predicted that the total number of car miles was likely to increase by between 83 and 142 per cent. by the year 2025. The growth may be less in London than elsewhere, but the road system in many parts of London has already been effectively saturated for many years. Even a proportion of that projected growth would simply seize up the city. It would certainly overwhelm the Government's current pet scheme for traffic movement in London—the so-called red routes.

Traffic growth will mean continuing pollution and its inevitable consequence—slower traffic—will mean more pollution. That is an unattractive and dangerous prospect for Londoners. The conclusion is obvious: we need to stabilise and to reduce the number of cars on our roads. An essential condition for achieving that, however it is done —and the Government have already told us that they are giving serious consideration to congestion pricing—is a public transport system with proper investment. Obviously, that is not what Londoners are getting from the Government now.

Three years ago the Monopolies and Mergers Commission estimated that London Transport's annual investment requirement in order to provide an acceptably modern network stood at £750 million. This year, the capital grant to London Transport's core business stands at half that figure—£346 million. It will rise over the next two years to just over £500 million. That is well below the funding London Transport believes to be essential for what it calls a "bedrock" investment to maintain the system in

[Mr. Keith Hill]

its present far from satisfactory state. A total of £600 million a year is required on the underground alone to achieve that purpose.

In other words, the Government are responding to the challenge of a growth in the number of cars and more pollution with a deteriorating public transport system in London. The time has come for firm hard choices and Labour has made them. The excellent report, published this week, by the party's policy commission on the environment, entitled "In Trust for Tomorrow", makes clear our commitment to cuts in the monstrously inflated roads programme in order to fund priority investment in public transport infrastructure and within the existing transport budget. I welcome that commitment, as will Londoners.

A multitude of useful measures may be taken to reduce transport-related air pollution in London, ranging from improved vehicle standards to better traffic management, and many are set out in Labour's report and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) will refer to them in his speech. The Gordian knot which demands to be cut is that of car dependency. It must be done by an attractive, efficient and safe public transport system. The Labour party now offers a sensible and realistic approach towards achieving that goal, and I am sure that Londoners will embrace it enthusiastically at the next general election.

5.57 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I welcome the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) because it is a matter in which I have taken a great interest both before my election and since. It was within a few days of the previous general election that I had cause to write to the then Secretary of State for the Environment—he is now at the Home Office—saying that in my constituency, levels of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide already exceeded the World Health Organisation levels for sensitive vegetation and that reports carried out at that time for the east Thames councils, of all political hues, pointed to excessive levels of hydrogen chloride and predicted that those levels would rise considerably if the planned commercial and other combustion processes were to proceed in the area.

At that time, I pointed out that figures produced by Greenwich council and the director of public health for Bexley pointed to alarming levels of respiratory illness in the area. Some of that may have been due to pollutants from contaminated industrial processes and land uses, but the evidence pointed clearly to airborne pollution from emissions from industrial process and from vehicular traffic.

At the same time, permission had been given for a combined heat and power waste incineration plant in nearby Lewisham, and approval had been given for the Barking power station. Also under consideration were a proposal to build in Belvedere probably the largest waste incinerator in western Europe and proposals by Thames Water to build two sewage sludge incinerators, one on the north and one on the south bank of the Thames. There was also a proposal to build an enlarged power station in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) which, fortunately, was withdrawn because of a public outcry.

Cory Environmental's proposal for the large waste incinerator was initially turned down after a public inquiry, but a new application is expected. No new planning consents should be granted for incineration processes within the east Thames corridor without a comprehensive study of the potential cumulative effects of all the current and proposed combustion processes in the area.

At the time of the inquiry into the Belvedere proposal, Professor Charles Howard of the foetal infant pathology department at the university of Liverpool gave evidence on behalf of BETTER—the Belvedere, Erith and Thamesmead Tackling Environmental Ruin campaign. Of the pollutants that would be produced in such a process, he said:

"These chemicals cause, among other things, growth retardation in the womb, which can be shown to cause permanent damage to kidneys and reduce life expectancy."

I believe that there needs to be a thorough examination of the damage that could be caused by an increase in the number of combustion processes in the south-east Thames area.

In east London, the annual average sulphur dioxide levels already approach or meet EC guide values, as has been shown by the South East Institute for Public Health. However, it is not just the individual pollutants that cause the problem, but the effect of the pollutants acting together, or the synergistic action of pollutants that make up the lethal cocktail to which my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham referred. There is clear evidence that ozone and higher nitrogen dioxide levels predispose individuals to a greater susceptibility to damage from other allergens such as pollen and fungal spores.

In an Adjournment debate last June, I had the opportunity to raise those matters. The then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment dismissed the problem of industrial processes and emissions by saying that they made

"a relatively small contribution, at most about 17 per cent. of existing nitrogen dioxide concentrations."

He rejected the idea of a comprehensive study. I ask the Minister today to give serious consideration to that idea.

Agreement was reached on one point in our previous debate. The Minister agreed that vehicles accounted for the vast majority of annual average concentrations—about 70 per cent. in London. He said:

"The motor car is the chief cause of the relatively high levels in nitrogen oxides in east London".— [*Official Report*, 10 June 1993; Vol.226, c.535.]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said, the problem is that the Government are not prepared to tackle the main cause of air pollution in London. The Minister talked of controlling emissions, but pollution from the growth in the use of motor vehicles will far outstrip any reductions in emissions caused by the introduction of lean burn engines, catalytic convertors or any other measures.

The Government remain wedded to the roads lobby. We have witnessed indecision, dithering and delay over the major public transport projects in London—the docklands light railway extension, the Jubilee line, crossrail and the upgrading of the Northern line—and a reluctance to back the London Docklands development corporation, British Rail, London Underground and Union Railways on the need for the Woolwich rail tunnel. However, the

Government have been prepared to press ahead with the environmentally damaging M11 link. They are also still wedded to the concept of the east London river crossing.

BBC's "First Sight" programme showed the incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in my constituency and highlighted a school where 10 per cent. of the pupils are regularly on medication, of which a supply has to be kept at school. Yet the Government are still wedded to the east London river crossing, which will produce 1,000 metric tonnes of gaseous and particulate pollution per year, in an area in which nitrogen dioxide levels already exceed the EC limit value.

There may have been a temporary halt to the previous proposals for the east London river crossing, because of opposition to the destruction of Oxleas wood, and the threat from the European Commission. However, the Government have still not withdrawn the line order, although the line goes past eight schools, including a special school for children who suffer with asthma, cystic fibrosis and heart disease.

The Government seem to be as wedded to the motor car lobby as the American Government are to the gun lobby. Has their view shifted since the time when Nicholas Ridley was at the Department of the Environment, and said:

"If people want to commute into London, who am I to say they shouldn't?"

For him that was a matter of consumer choice—yet, as my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said, unless there is investment in public transport, there will be no real choice.

Nicholas Ridley at the Department of the Environment was succeeded by Cecil Parkinson, who said that people's aspirations to use a car should not be "artificially constrained". Will the Minister tell us whether that is still Government policy? We well remember the 1992 financial statement, in which London Transport's investment programme was cut by one third while the roads programme remained intact.

My hon. Friend has referred to the levels of pollution in London in recent times. We are accustomed to the alarming stories about pollution in Mexico, in Los Angeles or in Athens, but until recently there was a belief in this country that Britain had cracked the pollution problem. After all, we had pioneered clean air legislation, and the industrial grime and killer smog of the 1950s were no more.

However, as has been pointed out, today we face even more dangerous pollutants in the air that we breathe—pollutants that we often cannot see, but which can cause a variety of symptoms, including hay fever, eczema and asthma, especially among children. They are also responsible for various forms of cancer. Surveys of hospital admissions, the incidence of asthma reported to GPs and the number of prescriptions for asthma and asthma-related diseases all show significant and worrying upward trends. That evidence has been further supported by the Office of Science and Technology in its excellent report "Breathing in our Cities".

There is no doubt that oxides of nitrogen, sulphur dioxide, ozone and particulate matter are all relevant to respiratory disease. In addition, there is the problem of carbon monoxide, an asphyxiant, as well as the volatile organic compounds that combine with ultra-violet light to produce ozone, which is known to be a major irritant.

My hon. Friend has mentioned recent incidents in which there have been crisis levels of emergency admissions to hospital. One weekend, Whipps Cross hospital in London was so inundated that it ran out of anti-asthma medicines. At King's College hospital, in Norwood, the casualty department was stuffed so full of asthma sufferers that all the nebulisers were in use at one time. So serious was the problem that one hospital alerted the national poisons unit and inquired whether there had been an escape of poisonous gas.

I am sorry that the minutes of the Select Committee on Transport concerning transport-related atmospheric pollution are not yet available, but I hope that the Government will study them seriously. In particular, I draw their attention to the evidence given to the Select Committee by Dr. Barry Gray, the consultant in the department of respiratory diseases at King's college hospital.

Can anyone now dispute that oxides of nitrogen exacerbate asthma? The concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in London last year increased by 17 per cent. Yes, there are international agreements to cut emissions, but the levels have been rising since the 1980s. Emissions from road transport rose by 72 per cent. in the 1980s. The Department of Health advisory group on medical aspects of air pollution published its report in 1993. The Government said that there was little cause for concern, but the report gives no grounds for complacency. Having reviewed all the evidence from epidemiological studies, it concludes: "many studies have found associations with NOx-linked pollution and health effects, at levels well below WHO guideline levels . . . the epidemiological evidence does not exclude an association between the types of pollution of which NOx forms part, and various respiratory health effects".

In my area, the latest figures available in the report by the director of public health show that asthma represented 10 per cent. of the admissions of children to hospital and that a further 7 per cent. were due to infections of the upper respiratory tract. Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, in my area of south-east London, hospital admissions of children for asthma rose by a staggering 207 per cent. Nationally, asthma costs the national health service between £700 million and £800 million a year. With costs to the Department of Social Security and other added costs, we are talking about a cost to the country of well over £1 billion.

Regrettably, London is at the head of the league table in the incidence of asthma. The London air quality network warned last month that London air was the worst for 40 years. I rang the Government's hotline today to find out the current situation. I discovered that the nearest monitoring station to my constituency, in Bexley, showed that in terms of sulphur dioxide levels, yesterday the air quality was poor. The forecast for London today is poor for nitrogen oxides, for sulphur dioxide, for benzene and for ozone.

It was suggested that the air quality for the rest of the country was good. However, I point out to those who will leave London tomorrow to return to their constituencies that there is some doubt about what the term "good" means. Under the present classification, the "good" category allows up to 100 parts per billion of ozone, whereas the World Health Organisation recommends a maximum one-hour guideline of 76 to 100 parts per billion. The National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection has said:

"to describe ozone levels approaching 100 parts per billion as good surely requires the use of rose-tinted spectacles."

In response to criticism from Friends of the Earth, the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), who was then Under-Secretary of State for Health, said:

"WHO has set guidelines which are intended to be levels above which action should be taken to reduce pollution. They are not

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

indications of a health risk as they incorporate safety margins."

The World Health Organisation itself says something quite different. It says:

"Since the air quality guideline value incorporates little or no margin of protection, widespread acute effects of the respiratory tract may be caused. The frequent and repetitive nature of ozone exposure might contribute to the development of irreversible decline of lung function as well as to structural lung damage."

We know that the WHO guidelines are frequently exceeded in London. Does the Minister stand by the remarks by the former Health Minister or will he now tell the truth, which would indeed be a breath of fresh air in the Chamber?

The Government put their faith in voluntary action. They turn their face against regulation and controls in their free-enterprise, deregulated culture. They seem still to be wedded to Ridley's belief in the right of the individual to have the freedom to pollute.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham referred to buses and to diesel emissions. Why have the Government rejected the host of proposals in the report by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution of 1991? Why have they rejected all the proposals that showed ways in which the emission of pollutants from heavy-duty diesel-engined vehicles could be reduced? There were positive recommendations in the report—recommendations which would involve grants and tax incentives, and use the vehicle excise duty. The Government rejected those recommendations on the basis that

"more generous treatment for buses . . . would amount to a special subsidy".

They also rejected tax incentives or the principle of taxing the polluter because that would be

"counter to the Government's policy of maintaining neutrality and low overall rates of tax".

They have shown that they are unwilling to take the necessary action to tackle the appalling levels of pollution and the risk to health in the capital city. It would appear that they have taken action only when they have been forced to do so by European legislation and European directives. I wonder whether the time may not be coming soon when the Government may be asking for a opt-out from those responsibilities as well.

The Department of the Environment expert panel on air standards and the Department's consultative paper on improving air quality both talk of guidelines. Those guidelines will be little more than a wish-list or pious hope unless they are given statutory backing.

The Government, after much pressure, have improved the air quality monitoring network in London, but little or nothing has been done on prevention. The impact of air pollution on the health of Londoners is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham said, extremely serious and requires urgent action now. The high rates of children with asthma and the unacceptable data associated with particulate emissions are of particular concern. As I have said, the health guidelines are regularly exceeded in London for a number of common pollutants, mainly from road transport. Unless mandatory air quality standards are set, with a target date for compliance, the proposed standards will fail to impact on transport and planning policies.

London remains vulnerable to future severe pollution episodes, but the Government have no plans to issue smog alerts backed by powers to restrain traffic, as has been done in other countries. The Department of the Environment survey in 1992 found that 19 million people live in areas in breach of the EC directive's annual mean guide value for nitrogen dioxide; eight of the 10 sites with the highest levels were in London. That somewhat contradicts the Minister's assurance given to the House last year that air quality in London is:

"good or very good 97 per cent. of the time".—[*Official Report*, 10 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 530.]

It is time that the Department of the Environment, if it is worthy of its name, tackled the real issues and confronted the Department of Transport.

As my hon. Friend said, the Department of Transport traffic management policy in London is to try to accommodate the maximum number of vehicles on the roads—maximising the efficiency of the road network. The Department judges the red routes in London a success. Red routes in London have led to an increase in traffic of 10 per cent.—10 per cent. more vehicles. Is the number of vehicles on the road an effective measure of efficiency, or should we be examining the number of people or the amount of goods? In a recent debate, an Environment Minister shouted across the Chamber that buses pollute, too. As my hon. Friend said, buses do pollute, too, but a bus takes up three times the space of a car but carries 80 people, whereas a car on average carries 1.3 people in the capital city. A vehicle-centred approach to efficiency will cause more congestion and pollution, not less. I support my hon. Friend's call for a major shift in expenditure in transport policy from road to public transport.

I shall conclude by examining briefly what the Government regard as safe in London. For whom is it safe? Certainly, there is evidence to show that levels of pollutants of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide, which may have little or no effect on a healthy adult, have a different effect on someone who is predisposed to asthma or other respiratory illness. There is also evidence to show that the effects can be much greater on young children than on adults. Children take in more air pollution in proportion to the size of their lungs and the toxins processed by a child's smaller organs accrue higher concentrations. Children also tend to be shorter than adults, so, on the pavement, they are closer to the source of pollution and inhale higher levels of it.

The dangers of other pollutants can be different in certain circumstances. I have already spoken about the high levels of products of chlorine in the atmosphere in the east Thames corridor. The director of public health for the Bexley health authority has prepared a report in which she says:

"Chlorine has not been incorporated into the evolutionary chemistry of man, or for that matter into any animal. It is a broad system poison with a wide range of biological activity, and is toxic to all animals.

It is also cumulative in body fat stores."

She then quoted Dr. Howard, of the department of foetal and infant pathology, at the Royal Liverpool Children's hospital, who has said:

"chlorine compounds can be transferred via the placenta to the developing foetus and through breastmilk to the newborn child at 100 to 200 times the body concentration of the mother."

There is clear evidence that the whole range of air-borne pollutants in London can be transmitted to the foetus in far greater concentrations than they are ingested by the adult.

One other pollutant represents a serious, growing problem in London, carbon monoxide, most of which comes from vehicle exhausts. In London, there are

occasions when the levels of carbon monoxide have reached double the World Health Organisation's guidelines. The Government's have predicted that, nationally, transport carbon emissions will rise from 38 million tons in 1990 to 62 million tons by 2010.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include drowsiness, impaired brain functioning, slow reflexes and impaired perception and thinking. One can only assume that the Government are suffering from such poisoning, given their inaction in dealing with that menace in the capital city.

6.21 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) on his success in the ballot and on his good sense in his choice of subject.

This is a timely debate, in the sense of the concern recently expressed about air quality, even though those of us who have had rather less sleep than normal would not necessarily regard this as the most timely moment in the course of the parliamentary day to be debating the subject.

We have had an able presentation from my hon. Friends the Members for Streatham and for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) of the key issues of air quality and the clear links between that and transport-induced emissions, which are a source of ever greater concern to those of us who live in and represent London constituencies.

The subject was highlighted graphically by the latest edition of *The Independent on Sunday*, with a front page leading article, entitled, "The day Britain choked". It reported:

"Britain has experienced the greatest asthma epidemic ever recorded during this summer's heatwave . . . At the height of the epidemic, some London hospitals ran out of medication for asthmatics."

My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich drew attention to that fact. The same point was stressed in the article, which continued:

"Startled doctors at one hospital at first thought there had been an escape of poison gas, as at Bhopal in India, 10 years ago.

'We suspect that this is the biggest documented outbreak anywhere in the world,' said Dr. Virginia Murray, of the National Poisons Unit at Guy's and St.Thomas's Hospitals."

That is pretty stark reading. The article reflects the seriousness of the problem.

We are all familiar with the background. We know that in the past poor air quality—especially smog—was a real problem in London. Mercifully, the problem has reduced dramatically in the past 50 years, as a result, essentially, of the clean air legislation and reductions in emissions from both industrial and domestic users. The traditional London pea souper is now, thankfully, a memory from the past.

In the past few years, an entirely new atmospheric threat has emerged. Industrially based pollution has continued to decline and the domestic use of coal fires has reduced dramatically, so easing pollution from that source, but pollution attributable to motor vehicles has been rising inexorably involving the emission of a range of different pollutants.

I need to go no further than the Government's report on the United Kingdom environment to highlight the trend. The report, which was published less than a couple of years ago, refers specifically to black smoke emissions, which have declined by 20 per cent. since 1980 because of the halving of emissions from domestic sources, but it highlights the fact that over the same period emissions from road transport of black smoke have doubled. Both my hon. Friends the Members for Streatham and for Woolwich have dealt specifically with black smoke emissions and hydrocarbon emissions, which are a specific cause of concern.

The Government's report on our environment highlighted the extent of the increase in average UK concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, which increased by 35 per cent. from 1986 to 1991. That was mainly because of the increased emissions from traffic. The report stresses the extent to which carbon monoxide emissions have also increased since 1980 by over 30 per cent. It is a chilling fact that 90 per cent. of emissions of carbon monoxide are derived from road vehicles.

These are all disturbing trends. They are associated with the remarkable increase in the incidence of asthma that is affecting a wide range of the population, but especially children in London and throughout the country. We have heard extremely worrying evidence of the extent of asthma incidents in Streatham. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham conducted a survey in the area and found some shattering evidence of the extent of the problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich rightly referred to the widespread and much reported problems of asthma in south-east London, problems with which I am familiar.

We know about the wide range of polluting emissions. We know, for example, about the incidence of black smoke, hydrocarbons, particulates, benzine—it is carcinogetic—NOx, low-level ozone and carbon monoxide. We know also of the extent of emissions of carbon dioxide —the greenhouse gas—for which we have targets which were agreed at the Rio conference two years ago. It will be extremely difficult for the Government to meet those targets if radical steps are not taken to secure substantial reductions in emissions, especially from motor vehicles.

Faced with all these serious grounds for concern, the Government's response has been extremely negligent. My hon. Friends have referred to the traditional Tory love affair with the motor car. We have heard references to the late Lord Ridley's wish for people to be free to drive their cars to wherever they might wish to go. He took a rather different view, however, if people proposed to drive their motor cars into the countryside where he lived privately. That was when his not-in-my-backyard instincts were aroused. He saw no problems, however, if anyone wanted to bring a motor car into London, whatever the impact on the environment.

We know also of Baroness Thatcher's preference for the use of the motor car rather than public transport, her hatred of public transport and her wish to be able to travel in her own car wherever and whenever she wanted. The fact that that privilege would inevitably result in a disadvantage to other people never crossed Baroness Thatcher's mind due to her highly selfish approach towards policy making.

The Government's current presumptions in seeking ever-increasing road capacity to cope with increased demand for car usage sadly perpetuates the trends set in place during the 1980s by Baroness Thatcher and the late Lord Ridley. The problem with the Government's approach is that the demand is insatiable. Their own figures show the extent of the projected increase in motor car usage. Even the low forecast of the increase in car usage over the next two decades from 1994 to 2014 gives a projected rise of 37 per cent. across Great Britain and 29 per cent. in London; the high forecast gives a possible

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

increase of 59 per cent. across the whole of Great Britain and 48 per cent. in London. One has to think for only a brief moment about the current state of London's traffic to realise that the prospect of an increase of between 29 and 48 per cent. in motor vehicle traffic in London is unsustainable. It would have catastrophic implications in terms of congestion, the amenity of Londoners and the increase in toxic emissions.

The idea that we should base public policy on a wish to satisfy that level of demand for increased vehicle usage in an area that is already hopelessly over-congested is the policy of the madhouse. The very process of building new roads contributes to the increase in congestion, as many road schemes have shown. When the M25 was originally conceived, it was envisaged as a relief road which would take traffic out of London and ease congestion in London. Now that we have the M25, we have ever-greater congestion in London and the M25 is so hopelessly congested that the argument is now being advanced that it must be extended in various places to a 14-lane super-highway. If that argument is accepted, it will lead us down an utterly disastrous route to increased road capacity, attracting yet more vehicles and increasing congestion, pollution and, in turn, the demand for more road space. It is a monster whose appetite is insatiable and, if it is indulged, it will continue to demand more and more.

The time has come to call a halt and say that a new policy approach is necessary. We cannot continue to sacrifice the countryside and the interests of ordinary people who rightly wish to enjoy fresh air and escape from the urban environment to attractive rural areas surrounding big cities. We cannot destroy those prospects by creating the massive devastation and damage that we have unfortunately witnessed at Twyford down in the past couple of years as the Government have driven through that road scheme against justified opposition from all those concerned about the environment—*[Interruption.]* The despoliation of our landscape may not concern the Minister, who is intervening from a sedentary position, but for Opposition Members the despoliation of Twyford down will be remembered as one of the most disgraceful actions of a Government whose whole transport policy has failed and is rightly rejected.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): The Labour party would have done the same.

Mr. Raynsford: In the past week, the Labour party has published a new environmental policy which has been well received by an extremely wide range of bodies concerned with the environment and the country's future. That policy document, "In Trust for Tomorrow", a concept which a Government who are in hock to the past cannot appreciate, sets out clearly how we shall change present policy. *[Interruption.]* The Minister, from a sedentary position, wants a price tag. I will tell him. He will be disappointed, because the price tag is a neutral price tag, as we are calling a halt to the wasteful expenditure on unnecessary road schemes, which has become the hallmark of the present Government. We shall call a halt to the squandering of millions, if not billions, of pounds on building roads that damage our countryside, which attract more vehicles into areas where there is already excessive congestion, and which do nothing to attack the fundamental problem of inadequate investment in public transport.

We shall achieve a significant shift in the allocation of resources away from unnecessary road schemes such as the M25 widening. I wonder whether the Minister would like to comment on the response of his hon. Friends from constituencies around the M25. He may not be a Transport Minister, but he is a Minister who has responsibilities, and has hon. Friends who represent constituencies around the route proposed for the widening of the M25. I wonder whether he has consulted them on their views about those proposals.

Mr. Atkins) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Raynsford: I have to advise the Minister that there is little enthusiasm for the massive road-building schemes of his Government among his hon. Friends who represent the areas that will be affected. That should give him pause for thought as to just how unpopular and inappropriate the Government's transport policies are.

A new approach is required—an approach that will achieve a shift in spending away from roads and in favour of public transport. A halt is needed to unnecessary, wasteful road-building projects such as the M25 extension, and instead there should be an emphasis on investing in much-needed public transport infrastructure.

London requires the modernisation of its rail network. We need modern, comfortable, reliable, attractive train services to ensure that people use them rather than bringing their motor cars into central London. We need new lines such as crossrail to provide links across the city where they do not exist at the moment. We need new links such as the Woolwich metro, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich rightly referred, to ensure that there are good public transport alternatives to avoid the need for road-building schemes such as the East London river crossing, which would have a dire environmental impact on a part of south-east London already suffering from excessive atmospheric pollution.

We need improved investment in the London underground. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham rightly highlighted the Government's failure to honour their pledge, made at the most recent general election, to invest £3.5 billion in improving the London underground to a decently modern metro standard. Instead, we have £1 billion less investment than was promised, and London Underground Ltd. literally has to look to every opportunity that it can to achieve basic modernisation work. For example, the Northern line rolling stock should have been replaced a long time ago, but London Underground is still waiting for news as to how the tendering process proceeds for the replacement of that stock.

We also know the delay that has occurred over the Jubilee line. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich rightly alluded to that. We have the strange saga of the docklands light railway extension, which cannot proceed because there is uncertainty about its funding. The most absurd proposal is emerging that stations should be dropped out of the scheme to reduce the cost, to make it possible to attract private finance.

One only has to pause for thought to realise the stupidity of a line of policy that suggests that much-needed stations, especially one at Cutty Sark in my constituency, which would attract a large number of tourists to one of the most

attractive tourist sites in London, should be deleted because it is not possible to raise sufficient private finance to fund that station in the short term. It is the worst possible example of short-termism, of failure to consider London's overall needs, and failure to provide the proper transport network that we require.

That is no way to plan a transport system, but it is typical of the approach that has been adopted by the Government. We have to reverse that and ensure that there is increased investment in public transport, financed by a transfer of resources from the road-building programme.

We also need to improve London's bus service. London's buses are critical to large numbers of people, particularly when undertaking short to medium length journeys and in areas where there is no adequate train or underground service. Large parts of south London are entirely without the underground system. Buses must be given an advantage to enable them to carry passengers at reasonable speed. Such an advantage means bus lanes which, in turn, will help to reduce the excess capacity available on roads that simply allows more private cars to use them. A policy that includes an extension of bus lanes, better priority for buses and restrictions on the volume of car traffic that can come into certain areas of London must be right.

By considering the experiment that has been conducted by the City of London in the past year, we can learn some interesting lessons. The City corporation introduced, as an anti-terrorism measure, wide-ranging restrictions on people's ability to bring private cars into the square mile. The results have been startling and startlingly successful. There has been a dramatic reduction in the problems of congestion and in pollution levels in the City, and there has been a shift in usage from private cars to public transport. Those results are all benefits and virtually everyone who has considered the experiment recognises that it has resulted in a significant improvement. It gives us clear evidence of the need to pursue similar radical and positive approaches to tackle our acute transport problems.

As well as pursuing measures to support and encourage public transport and to restrict unnecessary private vehicle movements into congested city areas, we also need effective monitoring of air quality. We need national air quality targets, local authorities with powers to be able to implement and monitor those targets and, where necessary, to specify higher targets to be achieved within their areas, particularly where there are very serious problems. Local authorities must also have the discretion to decide how they can ensure, within their local transport plans, that the standards and targets will be met.

We need a range of traffic-calming measures. We need alternatives that encourage modern, light train and supertram systems. The Croydon initiative is very much to be welcomed in that context, as are park-and-ride schemes. We also need far more effective warning when severe episodes of air pollution are expected. It is very much the responsibility of the Government to take the lead in giving such a warning. I hope that they will work with local authorities to ensure a system under which people are advised when it will present a risk, both to them and to other people, to take cars into congested areas.

We also need to place greater emphasis on technological responses and the extension of catalytic converters. As well as encouraging more retro-fitting, we need to encourage the whole industry to explore alternatives that will achieve greater fuel efficiency and, in the long term, to explore alternatives to the internal combustion engine. There is a range of policy options, which are covered in detail in Labour's new environmental policy. Those options point to a positive and hopeful way forward to a new approach to tackle the acute pollution problems that we face.

People all over London are rightly concerned about the problem, which calls out for an urgent and imaginative response. We in the Labour party have put forward that response. I hope that the Government will listen and will reverse their policy in response to London's needs.

6.43 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): I congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) on initiating this debate. I must correct him on one small point—I am not new to my job, I have been doing it since January. Neither am I a Transport Minister, although clearly the subject impacts on that Department, too.

As the parent of a daughter who is a quite severe asthmatic, I am only too well aware of the pressures on, and the problems caused for, youngsters—a matter which Labour Members raised. Therefore, I hope that they will accept that we have just as much, if not more, interest in such matters as anyone else. When the Government published the United Kingdom sustainable development strategy earlier this year, we identified improving air quality in our cities and towns as one of the most significant challenges for sustainable development. We are determined to meet that challenge.

That is why we followed the strategy almost immediately with our discussion document "Improving Air Quality", in which we put forward radical options for making the air that we breathe cleaner and healthier. We asked for full discussion, for constructive comment, for alternative views and for practical experiments to test ways of improving air quality. Some 130 organisations replied, from local government, business and the voluntary sector. They support our strategy. They have made positive suggestions and they have also expressed a willingness to work with us. We are now considering all the responses in depth and we will announce our proposals, including our plans for the first air quality experiments, later this year. I urge those hon. Members who have not read "Improving Air Quality"—especially those who suggest that nothing is happening—to read it now and, perhaps, to think again.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Minister spoke of the urgency of the Government's approach to the issue. Why has not the Department of Health published the report on an incident in December 1991 in which, it is claimed, 200 extra deaths occurred in London? Is not it a matter of shame for the Government that there have been two similar incidents in the past month, which may well have killed large numbers of people, yet no report has yet been published on the incident some three years ago?

Mr. Atkins: I cannot comment on that matter, as I am not a Health Minister. However, I undertake to ensure that the hon. Gentleman's concern is registered with Health Ministers, who will doubtless pursue the matter with him in due course. I regret that I cannot give him a direct answer.

While none of us for a second underestimates the concern that people have for the quality of air that we have

[Mr. Atkins]

experienced during the last couple of weekends, I would not want hon. Members to run away with idea that the matter is nearly as serious as we are sometimes led to believe. It is not killer smog; we are talking about incidences of poor air quality on certain occasions. They should not be overestimated in the tabloid terms that some people use. I am not suggesting that Opposition Members are guilty of that, but the media sometimes are.

When we publish our proposals this autumn, we will be building on the strong base of what we have already done. I remind the House that it was the Conservative party in government that brought in the Clean Air Act 1952, which was one of the most revolutionary Acts of its type. We know only too well the importance of that and what should be done to improve on it.

As the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said, we do not want to go back to the 1950s. We all know that acrid, choking, sulphur smog is no longer part of London life. Important as they still are, I shall not dwell on the measures that have halved sulphur emissions since 1970 and cut peak levels in London tenfold. We know that, as our life styles have changed, pollution has changed, especially in towns and cities where traffic is now the major source of many important pollutants. We have risen to those challenges and acted to deal with them.

Recent claims, which have been added to in the debate, that the public were given no information about ozone levels until the EC ozone directive came into force early this year are simply patently wrong. We launched our information service—which is second to none in the world—in October 1990, to provide reports and forecasts on a number of pollutants to the media and the public. We do that every day, not just when EC information levels or limits are approached. We do it through a free telephone line and also on Ceefax and Teletext, where the information is updated every hour, on the hour.

We spend some £4 million per year on air quality monitoring and we plan to expand those networks, doubling the number of sites in our enhanced urban network by 1997. We have consulted on integrating local monitoring with our own so that we all work to common standards. All the data from my Department's networks are published and are freely available. The national emissions inventory is updated annually and we are sponsoring the development of more detailed emissions inventories that will enable us to assess the best detailed improvement strategies for particular areas. London was the first city to be tackled.

Taken overall, the air in even our most congested towns and cities is cleaner than it was. Levels of lead in central London have fallen by more than six times since 1980 and emissions are set to reduce during the next few years because of the action that the Government have already taken. Already, 3 million vehicles—15 per cent., not 5 per cent., of the vehicle fleet—have catalysts. Nitrogen dioxide emissions are already falling and even greater gains will follow when new EC standards for petrol and diesel vehicles come into effect in 1996.

We have already begun pressing our European partners on improvements that we wish to see for the year 2000, such as on-board diagnostics that will tell drivers and testers whether emissions equipment is working properly. We are considering alternatives to the internal combustion engine. The Departments of the Environment, of Transport and of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will spend substantial sums during the next two years on research into cleaner alternative technologies.

Mr. Raynsford: The Minister has referred to the extent to which, in his view, emissions are falling. Can the Minister tell the House how the Government are doing as against their own targets in respect of NOx and CO_2missions?

Mr. Atkins: I shall try, when I reach the point in my speech.

Mr. Raynsford: I am sorry.

Mr. Atkins: Not at all. We have to keep ourselves awake at this time of the morning.

I chair the greener motoring forum which brings together central and local government, business and environmental groups in order to help our vital transport systems in a way that will reduce their impact on the environment. Naturally, we do not concentrate solely on technology. For example, we are looking at economic instruments, increases in fuel taxes and potential for congestion charging.

Together with the Department of Transport, we have issued guidance to local authorities on how the land use planning system can help to manage the impact of transport on the environment. Local authorities have been asked to put forward complete packages for transport funding and to give higher priority to facilities for walking, cycling and public transport, in which we are investing substantial sums.

Finally, we have certainly not forgotten other sources of pollution. London and all areas where domestic emissions are still important are covered by smoke control orders. In 1990, we introduced innovative new systems for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities to deal with industrial air pollution. The rest of the EC is only now looking to catch up with our integrated pollution control system, which is unique and a world beater. The integrated pollution prevention and control directive, which is still being discussed in Council, takes our IPC system as its model.

However, as hon. Gentlemen said—I do not disagree—more remains to be done. When I launched the document entitled "Improving Air Quality" I pointed clearly to three areas where the Government see a need for further work—air quality standards, short-term measures to reduce pollution from vehicles already on the road and local air quality management strategies for problem areas.

We set up the expert panel on air quality standards in 1991 to make recommendations based on the best currently available scientific evidence of likely risks and benefits. This year, EPAQS—we have an affection for acronyms in the Department of the Environment—has published its first report on benzene and ozone and it will publish further reports later this year, which doubtless will cover the particular points that the hon. Member for Greenwich raised. I will check.

Mr. Raynsford: So will I.

Mr. Atkins: Good. We will check together.

The Departments of the Environment and of Health will do all that they can to support the work of EPAQS and to

provide further assessment on pollution levels, trends and costs that will enable the Government to reach early decisions.

To be fair, the jury is still out on what causes asthma in the first place. We know that air pollution can affect many people with asthma and other breathing difficulties. Much work is going on not only in Government health departments but outside in the medical profession, the motoring journals and other sectors, in an attempt to discover whether asthma is caused by, for example, motoring activity or dust mites. As I discovered much to my interest the other day, the biggest cause of asthma in California is barbecues. That problem may not have hit us yet, but if our weather goes on being as warm as it has been, it may yet do so.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Is the Minister satisfied that the Government are spending sufficient money on asthma research? I understand that it totals £1 million a year. In my own health authority area, which covers the boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich, the cost to the NHS of treating reversible bronchia-constriction is in the region of £2 million a year, excluding the costs of prophylaxis, prevention, peak-flow meters and antibiotics for secondary infections. Should not more money be spent on asthma research to reduce the excessive bill for treating asthma with drugs?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me, but I cannot possibly answer that question, which is for my colleagues in the Department of Health. However, I will ensure that they read the debate. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will take the matter up with them, or I will get them to write to him. I cannot comment on costs, but we are doing a lot of work, rightly so, on asthma research. I have a particular personal interest in one form or another. My daughter believes that when she goes to the garage for petrol, the volatile organic compounds that surround petrol delivery sometimes aggravate her asthma. It is probably fair to expect car emissions to have an effect.

When I was roads Minister, I was instrumental in introducing emissions measurement into the MOT test. Although, like all aspects of that test, that applies only at the moment of testing, we should give thought to whether more regular checks ought to be made. Some London local authorities, such as Westminster and Southwark, are doing a lot. "Improving Air Quality" identified poorly maintained vehicles and black smoke from diesels as issues to be addressed. In 1992-93, the Vehicle Inspectorate carried out 16,000 spot checks and issued 200 prohibition notices as part of its regular enforcement activity. I am sure that all hon. Members would like fewer vehicles on our streets emitting black smoke and other obvious pollution. The other day, I noticed when following London taxis and open-topped tourist buses—which tend to be older vehicles—that they contribute significantly in that respect.

I recently attended a demonstration of the Royal Automobile Club's technology testing of passing cars. It is not yet proven, but it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister is complacent in many of the things that he says. Some countries already impose limits on PM10s—tiny, invisible soot particles of less than 10 microns that pass through our air passages and lodge in the lung. Those particles are coated with as many as 60 carcinogenic chemicals. One estimate is that they cause 10,000 deaths a year. The lowest estimate is 3,000 extra deaths. The number is increasing because PM10s come from diesels, which we have encouraged. The worst thing that we ever did was to take lead out of petrol, because it has increased benzene in the atmosphere, which has created more carcinogens. It is unlikely that I will be called to speak in the debate, but the Minister must be told that those problems need urgent examination.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman must have been asleep—like most people this time of the morning. I spoke all along about the work being done in those areas. I am fascinated to learn that the hon. Gentleman is now opposed to taking the lead out of petrol, which had the favour of many people across the parliamentary divide. Much work is being done on what is good and what is bad. The hon. Gentleman will know if he is a fair man—I am sure that he is, even if he is a Welshman—[HON MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I apologise, and I withdraw that remark. I am just trying to keep myself awake. In all seriousness, a lot of work is going on, as the hon. Gentleman knows, but it is not yet proven that diesel causes the problems.

Mr. Flynn: It is.

Mr. Atkins: I am sorry, but it is not. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that diesel is not as good as everyone thought that it was. That is fair. Much effort has been put in by the motoring manufacturers in developing the cleaner car, although they would say that the public consider the environmental aspects of their vehicles as being at the bottom of their buying agendas. None the less, the points that the hon. Gentleman makes have some validity in that there is still much work to be done, and, is being done, not only by Government but by industry and the medical profession, in trying to determine what is a contributory cause to the sort of pollution that we are talking about today.

Mr. Flynn *rose—*

Mr. Atkins: No, I shall not give way again, as I have only limited time and want to finish my point. The hon. Gentleman should have intervened at an earlier point, like all the rest of us.

As I was about to say, before I was so rudely interrupted, it should be clear from "Improving Air Quality" that we do not rule out new measures, but I think that there is scope for harnessing public willingness to do better. After all, badly maintained vehicles, as well as affecting the air that we all breathe, probably use more fuel and therefore waste drivers' money.

Lastly and most radically, in improving air quality, we set out the case for integrated local air quality management. The Government's national policies will reduce pollution generally throughout the country, but where there is traffic congestion or industry, or where there are other special factors, there may be a danger that standards will not be met. What we have in mind, therefore, is a menu of supplementary measures for problem areas. Each would choose the mix that would address its particular combination of problems most cost effectively. We have not yet finally determined the contents of the menu. We decided on a full and open delate. Therefore, in improving air quality, we listed the sorts of measures that might be considered and asked for comment and further suggestions.

Among the points that we put up for discussion were suggestions that local planning and highway authorities

[Mr. Atkins]

might be required to have specific regard to the impact of proposals on air quality; that traffic regulation orders could restrict vehicle access; and that there might be specially targeted measures to enforce controls on smoky vehicles in problem areas, more local information services and more detailed emission inventories, such as the one developed for London. Most of all, we need better integration of all the individual measures that can affect local air quality. Many of those are already in the hands of local authorities, and the hon. Member for Greenwich touched on that point in his concluding remarks. He believed that they should be, and will be, important players. It is obvious that, in an area such as London, one authority acting alone cannot solve all the problems. Local authorities will have to co-operate with each other, and they do so in London through the London air quality network. I hope that their co-operation will pay dividends.

Central Government, the new agency, business and the local community must also be drawn in, and we must leave room for innovation and adaptation. Testing how best to achieve proper co-ordination is therefore the key area for testing alternative approaches. As I said earlier, we will be announcing later this year the first experiments with local authorities that have said that they want to work with us. I hope that their positive response in London, together with that of other organisations, will be mirrored elsewhere.

I have looked with some interest at the Opposition's document: "Six Steps to Banish Smog" and have listened to what hon. Members have said tonight. I am only sorry that, four months after we initiated the debate, I saw nothing in that document, nor heard anything today, to suggest that what the Government have done requires any improvement from the Opposition.

7.5 am

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It has been very disappointing to hear the Minister read his prepared speech, because his attitude and demeanour do not match the crisis that London faces. We all have an interest in the matter because we have to breathe the air in London.

I mentioned lead earlier for a very good reason, because the campaign to remove lead from petrol won the support of all the environmental bodies. The result has been to increase the amount of aromatics—principally benzene—that get into the atmosphere. We know that benzene is powerfully carcinogenic. It causes cancer. It is in the air. One part per billion is already a problem, but it is in the atmosphere in much greater quantities. What do we do about that? We can improve the burn of the petrol to take out the benzene by adding extra oxygen, but if we do that we produce formaldehydes, which are also carcinogenic. We therefore have a very serious problem: none of the technical fixes appears to work.

The Minister suggested that 15 per cent. of cars had catalytic converters, and I believe that that is roughly correct. Tragically, however, 55 per cent. of the petrol that is bought is unleaded, and many people are buying super-unleaded petrol when they have no catalytic converters—with the result that their cars are not just more polluting, but 40 times more polluting than they would be if they were using the traditional leaded petrols. Catalytic converters do not work efficiently until the car has been driven for 10 km because they have to warm up, and 75 per cent. of all journeys in this city are shorter than that. Cars with catalytic converters are therefore doing more harm in those first 10 km than they would with no catalytic converters, using the old petrol.

Having heard a great deal of evidence, many of us are in despair about London's problem. That problem cannot be underestimated. I appeal to the Minister to bear in mind an incident that occurred in December 1991 in this city. Technicians reading the meters did not believe them. That happens with all disasters: as someone who has worked all his life in laboratories, I know that when a technician sees something very strange he does not believe it. In this instance, the instruments suddenly went off the scale, showing the highest levels of pollutants ever recorded. A report made for the Department of Health has still not been published, but we know from a summary that has been made available that there were at least 150 excess deaths.

The Minister has said that air pollution does not cause asthma. I believe that that has been established: there is no scientific link. Causal links are not established in many such cases. The Minister mentioned, however, that his daughter finds garages an irritant. That is because of the presence of benzene, which causes the pleasant smell when we put petrol into the car. Is benzene a powerful carcinogenic? We know that it comes out of exhausts as well. There are many things that we cannot prove, but we know for certain that asthmatics—whose numbers have grown in my county by 118 per cent. in the past 15 years—are greatly troubled by fumes from cars, and in atmospheres with high concentrations of particulates and poisons.

The position is getting worse, for the reasons that I have given. We do not know what we are doing. It is easy to say that we need research; we could continue to do research for the next 100 years, but we still might not find those causal links. It took us 30 years to find the link between cancer and smoking. We cannot wait that long in this case. Every day in this city an enormous, uncontrolled experiment is taking place. We are pumping a huge cocktail of chemicals into the atmosphere; we do not know what those chemicals do when they come together, but we know that mixing two toxic chemicals produces a mixture not just twice as toxic but possibly a hundred times as toxic. Given the great soup of chemicals in the air, a still day like that day in 1991, with barometric pressure placing a lid on the city and stopping the air from moving and sunshine baking the chemicals, will lead to a mass of complex chemical reactions producing a lethal mixture that we have to breathe.

It is certain that the ozone and particulates involved in London's pollution are a deadly mixture. We must not be complacent and congratulate ourselves on producing a number of reports or on being better than country A or country B; we must give urgent consideration to restricting the source of the pollution—cars. When the pollution reaches a certain level, we must say that cars cannot enter the city. Others countries are already taking such action. If we do not do so as well, hundreds—possibly thousands—of people will die unnecessarily in our capital city.

North-East Derbyshire

7.9 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My debate moves us towards the north, but it deals with problems similar to those that we have been discussing for London. The Minister may be interested to know that I introduced this topic in 1989 and that the Minister who replied for the Government on that occasion is now the Secretary of State for Health. I shall wait five years to see what position the current Minister has moved to.

Pollution knows no boundaries, as was obvious internationally when the Chernobyl incident occurred. Nationally, the figures from the Department of the Environment for ozone pollution during hot weather show that often the higher levels are not necessarily in counties with the largest towns but are sometimes in neighbouring areas. Oxfordshire is in the top list and Derbyshire is fourth in that set of figures. It may be that some of the problems resulting in the high ozone level in Derbyshire derive from neighbouring areas such as Sheffield, with the pollution drifting to Derbyshire.Locally, the crossing of boundaries is illustrated by the fact that the River Doe Lea, which starts in Bolsover district and constituency and is the worst polluted river in Europe, forms part of the border between the districts and constituencies of Derbyshire, North-East and Bolsover.

Individualism may help to create certain pollution problems, but it offers no solution to handling those problems. Action to tackle pollution has to be planned, co-ordinated and shared and, therefore, must be social in content. In tackling pollution, there is no such thing as isolated individualism.

Pollution controls do not need to destroy production and jobs. In fact, if pollution controls are operated correctly they should work in the opposite direction. Job opportunities and production should go along with improved pollution control techniques. An example of that developed in north-east Derbyshire. Biwaters of Clay Cross in north-east Derbyshire produces pipes which are often sold internationally. The company was a polluter, producing old-fashioned muck and dirt, and was under considerable pressure to clean up its act. Pressures were being applied by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

The firm obtained new markets in a peculiar way. When Lady Thatcher was Prime Minister, she went to Malaysia and became involved in trade and aid discussions. That opened up new markets and led to a development of rural piping throughout Malaysia. The great bulk of that production came from the Bywaters plant in Clay Cross. In order to increase production, the company agreed to instigate investment which would control the pollution problems in the area as well as helping with the expansion. So we have more jobs, greater production and less pollution as a result of that investment.

We have sometimes missed out on those opportunities. For instance, Avenue coke works at Wingerworth is now closed. More than 300 people were made redundant; yet the product was desirable for pollution control. The plant, however, was aging and produced pollutants itself. Investment and improvements were needed to maintain jobs and to make a product that would sell; the product being produced became inferior because of the conditions prevailing at the plant. We need policies that would allow an organisation such as Avenue coke works to continue its production without creating pollution.

Much has already been said about the need for an integrated social transport system at the national and international level. Although perhaps not yet in a very developed form, such systems are offered through the European Community. Plans to develop a common transport policy throughout the EC were discussed recently in Standing Committee A.

To highlight the extent of the pollution problem, I shall use north-east Derbyshire, and the Staveley area in particular, as an example. The northern part of Staveley falls within the constituency of Derbyshire, North-East while the southern part falls within the constituency of Chesterfield. That shows that boundaries are meaningless when we are debating pollution.

Mr. Wareing, a farmer of Barrow Hill, keeps elaborate records of the pollution that he encounters. He has recorded high levels of sulphur, molybdenum and fluoride in herbage and silage. Since 1971, 25 per cent. of calves born there have had eye defects, and some have been blind. He once showed me a photosensitive cow that had to be kept in the dark. He is pursuing cases in the courts against local firms. The value of what he is doing lies in the fact that the details will be placed in the public domain. There were also problems recently when travellers arrived in a nearby area that suffers similar problems. The travellers were therefore in considerable danger.

Asthma was mentioned in our previous debate. It is a considerable problem in the Staveley area. Many instances have been recorded at schools there; at Barrow Hill primary school, the figure is 23 per cent., which is at least twice the national average. That says something about the nature of the problems in the area. Pollution caused by transport may drift: Barrow Hill is not an area with high car use, so many other factors could come into play—some may be related to the problems recorded by the farmer to whom I referred.

Great attention was paid to Staveley's problems because of a scare about high levels of dioxins. There had been an incident at Coalite, and an examination was undertaken. Three farms in the Bolsover area were taken out of production—two produced milk and the one that sold meat supplies reared suckling cows. What happened there has been stressed a great deal by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Because of the problems at Coalite, investigations were started over a somewhat wider area in Staveley and it was discovered that there was another strain of dioxin, different from the Coalite pollution. That was traced to Stanton plc. In 1993, eight farms in the area were taken out of milk production and had their milk tested. According to current standards, the levels were found acceptable, so the farms went back into milk production.

Although the dioxin problems were discovered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and by the Department of the Environment, the work of cleaning them up had to be pursued by Chesterfield borough council and North-East Derbyshire district council, mainly through their environmental health officers. That produced a problem in terms of the availability of resources to tackle such tasks, but at least when we found out what the levels were we could begin to take action.

Other problems in the area include river pollution and the difficulty of containing consent levels in what goes into

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

the River Rother, into which the Doe Lea eventually flows. We also have problems involving sewage treatment and the death of the river. The National Rivers Authority has tried to turn the river back into a waterway that can support fish.

Another problem connected with sewage is the overflow from drains, caused by the inadequacy of the provision, which is in the hands of Yorkshire Water Services. There is a great need to encourage the company to extend its improvements in the area to help districts in Hollingwood where there is serious flooding, involving overflows of sewage in residential areas and in an area where there is a working men's club.

The traffic problems that were discussed in the previous debate also exist in my area.

There was a particular problem at Rhône-Poulenc—generally known as Staveley Chemicals—which has an elaborate warning system for local residents. A siren sounds when there is held to be danger in the area. Unfortunately, it sounded accidentally recently and there was no system for telling people that the danger was over. Luckily, because of the lesson that it learned, the company has now moved to establish a new system. The action card, which is quite elaborate, has to be distributed in the Staveley area. It tells people in great detail about going indoors and staying there, about tuning to local radio and so on, about what they have to do to assist the police and fire services, and about waiting for the all-clear. Unfortunately, within that area there are several other firms —such as Coalite, which is not too far away—and they all operate similar systems. What is required is an understanding that the signalling system is different in different areas. When the accident took place, people rang up Coalite instead of Staveley Chemicals to ask what was wrong in the area.

Staveley's problems must be tackled in a co-ordinated way. I do not think that we have the provisions to do that. We have a junior Minister for the Environment and Countryside within the Department of the Environment who has some overall responsibilities for these matters, but who does not have the status or the wherewithal to be able to operate fully. We have environmental protection legislation which throws tasks on to local government, as I mentioned, but local government is fantastically underfunded in the areas with which I am dealing. In terms of standard spending assessment and the grants related to it, North-East Derbyshire district council is 275th out of 296 English councils. Chesterfield borough council is only a little ahead of that.

Then there is the problem of co-ordinating the areas to which I have referred. It was interesting that in the previous debate the Minister frequently said, "That is not a matter for me; it is a matter for the Department of Transport or for the Department of Health." A great difficulty in pollution control is drawing the threads together and getting hold of all the information required. In terms of handling a problem such as the one in Staveley, there are Department of Health investigations and the Department of the Environment is involved. The Department of Trade and Industry is also involved because we are talking about industries in the area, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is involved because we are talking about farms in the area. The Department of Employment, too, is involved because jobs are at stake. A whole set of agencies are involved, including Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, the National Rivers Authority and the Health and Safety Executive. Local government bodies then come into it because Chesterfield borough and North-East Derbyshire district council have environmental health responsibilities. Planning arrangements, which are sometimes overridden by the Department of the Environment on appeal, are in the hands of the district and county councils. Then there are the private bodies. There is Rhône-Poulenc—traditionally known as Staveley Chemicals—and Yorkshire Water.

The start of a solution to tackle the problems in an area such as Staveley is a full environmental survey in the area drawing the many threads together. Once we know the facts, as we eventually discovered the facts about dioxin, we can take the appropriate action to deal with the problem. But we need an agency that is able to do that. We need a new Department of Environmental Protection which will be able to co-ordinate investigations and to offer the facilities required. Such a Department could also facilitate solutions for the area.

Staveley is by no means unique in its problems. When it was discovered that Stanton plc was responsible for the dioxin in the area, the Stanton works at Stanton, in Erewash, were investigated and it was found that a similar problem existed there. I imagine that the problem exists wherever there are large industrial complexes. However, there are hopes in the Staveley area that there will be improvements. There is even a faint hope in the Department of the Environment.

In a letter to me dated 29 April, the Secretary of State for the Environment, when calls had beem made to him for the type of environmental survey about which I am talking, stated:

"You will appreciate that, until the current work being undertaken by HMIP and the NRA has been completed and the results published, and the question of the prosecutions has been decided, it would not be appropriate for me to take up your invitation to visit your constituency. As soon as the additional work that HMIP is taking forward has been completed and assessed, I will write to you again about whether anything further needs to be done in response to your request for a full investigation of environmental problems in the area concerned."

There are things which we await, unless a message arrives this morning about those possibilities.

There is the possibility of action being taken in the Staveley area. For instance, my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is due to visit us and the areas that I am describing on 15 September. That closely follows the publication of Labour's document "In Trust for Tomorrow", which was mentioned in a debate earlier today. I was keen to seek the position of chair of the Labour Back-Bench environment committee because of my experiences especially in north-east Derbyshire, often on a wider basis than the ones that I have stressed so far in terms of the Staveley area.

There are more problems than the ones relating to Staveley. We have been involved in a pit closure programme and privatisation. No mines are left in Derbyshire. We have one National Union of Mineworkers branch at Highmoor which is associated with the Kiveton combine, but it is due to close in September. We have the problem of mine water discharges which has been stressed by the National Rivers Authority. We also have opencast problems in the area. Despite strong objection, the most recent development was that at Spinkhill, which is not too far from some of the pits that have been closed. We have

areas of considerable opencast potential in rural areas which have not had anything to do with mining since possibly the 17th and 18th centuries. We also have the areas where there have been recent closures. Moves should be made to come in and opencast an area where a pit has closed. We also have the residual problem of mining subsidence, and inadequate means to deal with that in various areas.

The river pollution associated with the River Rother moves into other areas, apart from Staveley, to the north of the constituency through Killamarsh, where it goes close to a Leigh Environmental plant, a subject on which I had a previous Adjournment debate. We had a lengthy discussion on the matter because it was an extended Adjournment debate. Across the border in Rother Valley country park, which is in a neighbouring constituency, the water for the lake had to be imported: the water in the River Rother could not be used as it was too polluted. We also have other sewerage problems. The town in Dronfield has developed considerably and the River Drone, which passes close to a school in neighbouring Unstone, is sometimes something of an open sewer.

Obviously, such problems are not confined within the boundaries of north-east Derbyshire. The wider north-eastern corner of Derbyshire has the same problems as those at Coalite—the massive opencast development taking place at Arkwright, and the general lack of investment throughout the whole area which would enable the type of environmental improvement that I have described in relation to Biwater to take place more generally.

The Government's failures need stressing, as does Labour's policy. For instance, the Minister and I and others have already clashed over the Energy Conservation Bill, which in many ways was a mild measure involving audit and conservation plans. From what was said at an earlier meeting of the European Standing Committee, I expected that before the end of this week we would have a statement in the House on transport and safety policies. Unfortunately, that has not taken place. We have discovered from a Court of Auditors report on environmental matters that many of the projects in which the European Community is involved are counterproductive environmentally.

A large jump must be made to produce the right policy for the environment. To that end, I will summarise briefly some of the Labour party's proposals. We have advocated a green industrial strategy, in which new jobs and reductions in pollution go hand in hand, as I have suggested. Our sustainable transport policy shifts the emphasis to public transport, which offers many of the benefits that I described in the previous debate on this issue. Under our energy efficiency programme, no new nuclear power stations would be commissioned and the presumption is against opencast mining. That is of particular importance to north-east Derbyshire. Our proposals to democratise planning systems would also benefit my area. We have also advocated global institutional provisions and provisions about individual rights.

Those policies represent the way forward. The problem is that we cannot wait for some of those initiatives to be introduced; the Government need to pick them up and run with them now. That is the way to tackle the problems I have outlined.

7.35 am

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on his good fortune to have a debate at this cheerful hour of the morning and on the manner in which he introduced it.

It is interesting to note that, five years ago, my hon. Friend had the good fortune, yet again, to debate the problems of pollution in north-east Derbyshire. The then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment who replied to the debate is now the Secretary of State for Health. Is she still Secretary of State?

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Howarth: That is the case.

On that occasion, the then hon. Lady said:

"The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has outlined a number of environmental concerns in his constituency. They are all subjects to which the Government are giving detailed consideration."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1989; Vol.149, c. 245.]

It is interesting that, five years on, my hon. Friend has raised exactly the same concerns, which the Government are still subjecting to detailed consideration. Insufficient progress has been made and my hon. Friend is right to outline those concerns, once again, in some detail.

My hon. Friend is also right to say that just as pollution knows no international boundaries, equally it knows no regional boundaries. The problems of the Rivers Doe Lea and Rother, which my hon. Friend has outlined, have a regional significance and should be considered further by the Government. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who is a keen angler, would like to be able to fish in that river, but, at the moment, it has no fish worth catching. The problems caused by pollution extend beyond regions and even counties.

My hon. Friend also drew attention to the scale of pollution confronted in his constituency, for example, at Staveley. I know that, over the years, my hon. Friend for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has campaigned against dioxin contamination in the area. The Minister will appreciate that great concern has been expressed about the impact of the incineration of various materials on public health. The burning temperatures in that process must be monitored constantly and kept up to right level, so that dioxins are not created. It is important that the problem is kept under constant review and that action is taken where necessary to try to reduce it.

We must, as my hon. Friend said, have a properly co-ordinated strategy not only in his constituency but throughout the country. The House will be aware that there was a proposal in the Queen's Speech to introduce paving legislation for an environment agency. Sadly, that idea has sunk without trace. It seems that no such Bill exists. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Labour party—he is well aware of this—has a clear blueprint of what an environment agency should do. Indeed, the agency was our idea. I think that the Minister will concede that.

Mr. Atkins: Certainly not.

Mr. Howarth: If he examines the record, the Minister will find that the Labour party was talking about creating

[Mr. Howarth]

an environment agency when he was worrying about the problems of Northern Ireland. I am sure that he still worries about those problems at length.

An environment agency would provide the co-ordination that my hon. Friend rightly thinks is lacking. It would focus also on bringing together the responsible statutory bodies and other agencies so that all resources and concerns could be handled in a proper manner. Local authorities would be involved as well.

Some time ago, my hon. Friend issued an invitation to the Secretary of State for the Environment to visit his constituency. He received what might be described as a holding letter. It told my hon. Friend that certain developments were under way and, as a result, the Secretary of State might later consider visiting Derbyshire, North-East. I understand that it might be important that investigations should be made and completed before a visit takes place.

I have undertaken to visit my hon. Friend's constituency on 15 September. If the Minister is free on that day, I am sure that he would like to join me. I realise that he will not have his diary with him now. I am sure that my hon. Friend would make it an interesting and constructive day. Perhaps between us we could start to resolve some of the problems that my hon. Friend has been talking about for the past five years and beyond.

I think that it is generally accepted that reform of the planning system is long overdue. That forms part of the Labour party document which was published the other day, "In Trust for Tomorrow". That reform would be helpful to our efforts to resolve some of the problems that my hon. Friend has outlined. My hon. Friend talked about the presumption against opencast mining. That, too, forms part of "In Trust for Tomorrow" and would be a helpful policy.

It has taken five years for my hon. Friend to move from one debate to another. The problems that he referred to five years ago still face us. It is time that pollution generally, and especially in my hon. Friend's constituency, received a proper and co-ordinated response from the Government. If the Minister is not willing so to respond, the quicker we get a Government who are—that is a Labour Government —the better.

7.43 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): As is customary, and I have no difficulty in doing so, I congratulate the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on securing this debate. He has, by all accounts—past correspondence and contributions—been signally effective in stimulating debate on environmental issues of concern to his constituents. I prepared a speech in anticipation of some of the points that he would make, but if I do not deal with all the issues that he has raised, I will write to him with such further comments as are necessary.

I have noted the House's past interest in problems in Derbyshire and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for providing me with an opportunity to underline the Government's continued concern to protect the health of our people and the state of the environment in the country and particularly in Derbyshire, as highlighted in this debate.

Incidentally, I visited part of the national forest, which covers areas of Derbyshire, and saw for myself some of the activities that have been going on as a result of the successful project there. The benefits of the Government's strategy can be seen in many parts of the country. I shall take this opportunity to describe examples of the successes in and around north-east Derbyshire, which are contributing to the environmental regeneration of the area.

At Leigh Environmental, Killamarsh, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has required a major refurbishment of the incineration plant, which is expected to come on line later this year, allowing the company to meet new plant standards in advance of the specified date. Improvements already carried out in response to improvement conditions, particularly those related to improved control of incinerator temperature and waste feed, have resulted in a substantial reduction in complaints from people living and working close to the site.

At Rhône-Poulenc, near Staveley, part of the site is already under HMIP control. A number of improvement conditions have already been complied with. New plant standards will be achieved progressively by 1998, resulting in the virtual elimination of benzene releases. The quality of releases to the River Rother from the site have improved since the issue of the authorisation. Other processes on site are due to be controlled by HMIP soon, resulting in further reductions in mercury releases into the environment. The company is pursuing pioneering development work on reed bed technology with the active encouragement of HMIP.

GKN Sheepbridge, near Chesterfield, has been the source of recent complaints, and agreement has been reached for improvements to be undertaken.

At Coalite Fuels, Bolsover, some 25 improvement conditions were imposed and all the short-term conditions have now been complied with. Discharges to the River Doe Lea have improved considerably following the installation of improved settling facilities called for by HMIP.

At Coalite Products, nine processes have come under HMIP control between October 1992 and June 1994. Many of the improvement conditions have already been completed, but a number more remain. Those improvement conditions are all aimed at the achievement of new plant standards within defined timescales.

A close liaison is being developed between HMIP, the National Rivers Authority and the waste regulatory authorities in north-east Derbyshire in advance of the environment agency, on which good progress is being made and about which we hope to hear more later this year. Meetings are being held and matters of mutual concern discussed and progressed in an integrated fashion. There is also close liaison between the regulators, including the local authorities and regional health authority. Joint meetings have been held and initiatives established to collect environmental data. The aim is to undertake a modelling exercise studying the interaction of pollutants from various sources in the area.

The regulatory authorities continue to attend liaison committees, which act as a forum for discussion and an information conduit between process operators and local pressure groups and members of the public.

In May, a new rivers ecosystems scheme for classifying water quality was introduced. It will enable statutory water quality objectives to be set for the first time for individual stretches of water. Objectives will normally be set to reflect improvements expected to result from existing obligations under EC and domestic legislation and from discretionary

spending. The NRA will shortly prepare proposals for a limited number of pilot catchments. There will be full consultation informally by the NRA and formally by the Secretary of State.

The River Doe Lea has been the subject of considerable attention by the NRA as it has sought to identify the problems and find solutions. I understand that the NRA is taking civil action against Coalite Chemicals to recover the costs of removing dioxins from the Doe Lea and Rother rivers. That civil action has taken some time to prepare because analysis of dioxin contamination is very complex, time consuming and costly.

The Government have funded derelict land reclamation in north-east Derbyshire for many years. In the three years to April 1994, 20 schemes were completed and 12 more were in the pipeline. Those will reclaim 380 hectares and produce 30 hectares of industrial land, about 1,000 to 1,500 jobs and up to £40 million of private sector investment. English Partnerships has a continuing commitment to reclamation work in the area and the Government are also providing £250,000 for the reclamation work of the Cresswell groundwork trust in the area.

An extensive and co-ordinated programme of environmental research and monitoring has already been carried out in north-east Derbyshire. Several reports detailing results of those studies have already been published, and the Government have given assurances that all the data will be made public. From the strategy that I have outlined, and from the examples that I have given, I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is reassured that all the agencies are committed to environmental protection and environmental regeneration, and to working closely with representatives of the local community.

Successful environmental protection is dependent on a co-ordinated approach by all parties, to ensure that the maximum benefit is achieved, commensurate with the state of knowledge, technology and costs to the product, process and the environment.

Mr. Barnes: Does the Minister feel that the developments that he has spoken about begin to match up to the full environmental survey that it is increasingly obvious is required in the area? Out of the bits and pieces that begin to develop, a story may be built up. We need to put together all the resources and sectors that I was speaking about, and to investigate the matter completely. Once we do that, we shall begin to know the answers that should be implemented. The Minister was also invited to join us in investigations into the area, because sometimes the equivalent of site visits are useful in helping to determine people's positions.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Like any politician or Minister, I would never say "never". We believe that much work is being done in the area, although obviously there is more yet to be done. As for the offer of a visit, I shall look at the diary and if I can accept that offer, I will.

Mesopotamia

7.51 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate the former Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), on his recent appointment. I know that, this morning, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the new Minister, will be first class in his post.

It has been a long night. It was a long day yesterday for those who waited to discover what their change of portfolio might be. It was a long day on the Opposition Benches, waiting for announcements of shadow leaders and deputy shadow leaders. Our time span of difficulties here in this Palace of Westminster is just a tiny flicker in the time span of the suffering of the people on whose plight I wish to dwell this morning. I speak of the marsh arabs of the Mesopotamian marshes, and of the southern Iraqi Shi-ites, whose lives bordered the Mesopotamian marshlands until so very recently.

Thirty thousand square miles of antique waterways, with 10,000 square miles of that large expanse always under water, have been destroyed. Earlier this year, the Royal Air Force gave me to display, through the courtesy of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, now chairman of the Conservative party, some material showing the extent of the works that had caused that devastating damage. It was a tragic sight—enormous bulwarks, dams, the type of things that one can imagine would divert all the rivers of the United Kingdom.

Millions and millions of dollars have been poured into taking away the ancient Mesopotamian marshlands, the waters of Babylon, and creating an arid desert. There are those who claim—Saddam Hussein and his minions among them—that the consequential burning of the reed huts, the marshland villages, the rice farms, the date palms, all the historic agricultural produce of the marshlands, is all done for beneficial agricultural purposes.

I am chairman of the AMAR—assisting marsh arabs and refugees—appeal and chairman of the all-party parliamentary group for Iraq. In that capacity, I have had the opportunity to visit the area and to listen to the hundreds of thousands of victims whose homes have been destroyed, apparently for good, and whose lives have been wrecked irreparably.

I recall at the end of the war, when I was a small child, people, dreadfully full of guilt, asking, "Why didn't we listen? Why didn't we listen to the Jews when they said that they were being exterminated? Why didn't we listen when the concentration camps were being built and used?" Today, there are people who still refuse to listen to victims unless they see them on the television, go to Rwanda or experience at first hand the Bosnian tragedies. I am ashamed of those people. They refuse to listen to the plight of the victims. But it is the victims who can tell us of the gruesome tortures and the lifelong incarcerations in gaols below the surface of the ground in Baghdad and who, today, tell us of the degradation of the marshlands and the despoliation of that wonderful, unique habitat for wildlife, birds, animals and, most importantly, humans.

I am engaged in saving the survivors—there are 100,000 of them. Those survivors have fled into Iran. Some 30,000 of them are in Saudi Arabia, but it has not been possible to visit them. In Iran, we have a team of doctors, 60 medical people, 160 teachers and a number of people

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

who support and help us. Those people are working day and night. In conditions of acute danger, they have crept back into the marshlands where they are managing to save the lives—temporarily at least—of the remaining 50,000 or so marsh arabs who are coming ever closer to the border with Iran. I do not know whether they will come through because dams, and yet more dams, have been erected. Along the top of those dams, as I have seen, soldiers stand with machine guns and bombard the people as they attempt their final few yards to escape. Now, a road has been created along which armed vehicles are roaming along the border.

We care for those who can get out. Last August, when I was there, 11,000 people streamed through our medical clinic. The British Government have been helping us and I want to give warm thanks for the competence of the Overseas Development Administration to the Minister for Overseas Development and her senior staff—Mr. Ron White now has the Iraq desk in the ODA.

We have had consistent and wonderfully sensitive and thoughtful support from ECHO—the European Community humanitarian aid organisation that is based in Brussels. Mr. Gomez Reino, Mr. Donato Chiarini and Mr. Richard Lewartowski have been consistent and understanding in their support. I was delighted when Dr. Rietweldt managed to visit the region and see a small portion of our work the other day.

Iran, a country more sinned against than sinning, has given us consistent and tremendous partnership support throughout, which still continues. A representative of the president came from Iran the other day and I was fortunate enough to introduce him to the Foreign Secretary. They were in complete agreement about humanitarian work. They were wonderful supporters from Iran.

Surely the time has come to start a proper dialogue with Iran on the cultural and, perhaps, the religious differences that have kept our countries apart for too long. I want that dialogue to start under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. I am co-chairman of the UNESCO committee in the House of Commons and I believe that we might manage to begin a substantial, far-reaching dialogue that could begin to knit together those unravelled threads of cultural dialogue that have stretched back over so many centuries between two historic civilisations.

It is difficult to have any feelings other than disgust and disdain for Saddam Hussein, a man whose sole purpose seems to be to wipe out everybody who voices even the most modest disagreement for his unbearable and inhumane policies. That man is a genocidal monster. I am so grateful to the Government for all the support they have given to me and others in attempting to repair just a fraction of the damage that he has caused.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) knows that I disagree with her deeply on the substance of what she has said. However, I want to defend her right in raising a very important subject, placed at No. 9 in the Consolidated Fund debates, to have proper time for her speech and to have a proper ministerial reply— *[Interruption.]* I am on a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that, although it is an interesting point, it is not a point of order.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already said that, in my view, the hon. Gentleman did not raise a point of order. It might be a point of substance, but it is not a point of order.

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Population and Development (Conference)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Conway.]*

8 am

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): It comes as no surprise to find myself standing here this morning, but it comes as a great surprise and pleasure to find that my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) is on the Front Bench to reply to the debate.

Perhaps I should declare my interest. I have had the honour to be invited to be a member of the United Kingdom delegation at the international conference on population and development which is to take place in Cairo in September. I should add that I am doing so at my own expense.

The conference, which is to be held between 5 and 13 September, was created by the United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution in 1989. The secretary general of the conference is Dr. Nafis Sadik, the first-class executive director of the United Nations Population Fund. It is the fifth international conference on population. The first was held in Rome in 1954 and the second in Belgrade in 1965. The third was held in Bucharest in 1974, and 10 years later Mexico City set the population and family planning agenda for the next decade.

The publicity generated by the conference in Bucharest in 1974 brought population issues to world attention for the first time. Although the less-developed countries were backing the argument that development was the best contraceptive, many Governments launched their own family planning programmes following the discussions at the conference and the publication of "World Population Plan of Action". By the time of the next conference in Mexico in 1984, most developing countries were strongly supportive of family planning programmes to improve maternal and child health and to reduce population growth rates. The conference in Cairo aims to take the next step and to provide an action-oriented plan to increase worldwide commitment to population and development issues.

The conference is the result of growing recognition throughout the world of the interrelationships between population, environment, resources and development. It is also a recognition that the women's movement can no longer continue to grow parallel to and distinct from the movement towards sustainable development. It is now widely accepted that people are both the victims and the cause of environmental degradation of the planet. The conference will attempt to come to terms with the realisation that the process of sustainable development is made much more difficult, if not impossible, by the high rates of population growth which prevail when family planning services are not widely available and accepted.

The expression "Development is the best contraceptive" is fundamentally a lobbying expression by those countries that have been seeking more aid. It is, to a certain extent, true, but the first thing a country has to get is development. I am always attracted to the illustration of Indonesia as an example of where a planned, carefully-thought-out planning programme, backed by a full parallel programme of education, is able to produce a reduction in population as a pre-condition of economic growth. Indonesia is now one of the Asian tigers and it is admitted by all in government that it would never have happened were it not for that initial family planning programme.

We all know how serious population growth can be and that it is the root cause of many of the world's problems. For example, the tragedy in Rwanda is primarily a territorial dispute brought about by overcrowding. In a revealing article in *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "The Coming Anarchy", Robert D. Kaplan shows how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet, with particular emphasis on Africa. He writes of the withering away of Governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease and the growing pervasiveness of war. All that is seen in Rwanda, which I believe will be the first of many similar disputes.

In recent years, there has been a change in perspective in the developed world of how this issue is beginning to affect our planet. We saw it in Rio in 1992 and after my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister appeared at the Dispatch Box when a remarkable number of hon. Members rose to ask questions about population. The trend was continued at the G7 summits in Tokyo in 1993 and in Naples this year. But, above all, the USA is the country which has so shifted its position during the past decade.

Under the new Administration, President Clinton has set up a global committee to look at global issues—matters such as the environment, drugs and, in particular, population, which the head of the global action committee, Senator Tim Worth, earmarked as the most fundamental issue of all.

In addition, the United States has managed to separate the issue of abortion from family planning. Anyone who studies the subject for more than a few minutes will realise that family planning and abortion are separate matters, and abortion is the most ineffective and inefficient form of family planning that there could be. No one in their right mind could concede that it is a central part of any family planning programme. I regret that one group that does not seem to have changed its mind is the Pope and his advisers in the Vatican, but more of that in a moment. But it is now clear that attitudes around the world are changing, most notably in the scientific community.

An excellent post note issued by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology published a few weeks ago referred to the science academies of the world meeting in New Delhi in September 1993 where Britain was represented by the Royal Society. They came to the overall conclusion that, while the relationships between human population, development and environment are complex and not fully understood, there is no doubt that the threat to the ecosystem is linked to population size and resource use.

Time does not permit me to deal with some quite excellent other conclusions, but in its final conclusion the meeting called on Governments and international decision makers to take incisive action now and adopt an integrated policy on population and sustainable development on a global scale. That is not just a fringe group reaching that conclusion but the leading scientists of the world. I put it to the House that there can be no higher authority than that.

In response to that publication by the scientists of the world, the Royal Society held a seminar on 11 July at which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development was the keynote speaker on behalf of the Government. She made quite the most significant speech

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

on this subject that Britain has seen. It marks a fundamental and welcome shift in the Government's position and attitude.

The Government launched the Overseas Development Administration's document entitled "Children by Choice, not Chance: Meeting the Challenge", a top-class, good-quality, informative and instructive document, in which my right hon. Friend said:

"The challenge is there. We can ignore women's demands; we would then expect the world's population to triple to 17 billion within two hundred years. Or we can meet the demand for family planning and so ensure that the world's population stabilises at about double its present level."

My noble Friend's speech was full of excellent observations and comments, and it set out the fundamental position. I should have liked to quote much more, but time does not permit. My noble Friend also announced a huge increase in population activities funding—£100 million over the next two years. Can it be matched by other Governments in the European Union and around the world? It would be churlish to press the Government to go further, but I give notice that I shall be pressing in due course that that course of action be taken.

A number of outstanding points from PrepCom remain to be resolved—such as estimates of resource needs, a definition of family planning, fertility regulation, reproductive and sexual health, safe motherhood, unsafe abortion, the right of adolescents to privacy, confidentiality and so on. Those unresolved issues will be the subject of debate at the Cairo conference and I look forward to playing my own part in that.

At the heart is the tricky question of resources. My noble Friend Lady Chalker has said many times that she does not want to set targets, and she is probably right that the quality of programmes is more important than any target. However, we should not shy away from targets. We set them for the citizens charter, inflation, education and even the Child Support Agency. One should not totally exclude targets, because one does not have to hit the bull's eye on every occasion.

The resources question remains unresolved. As the Government have pledged an increase in funding, can my hon. Friend the Minister say whether the targets in the draft document are acceptable to the Government? If not, to what percentage of the budget does he expect the Government to commit themselves?

I urge my hon. Friend to address himself also to the question of how he might counter the Vatican's influence. The conference is subject to intense lobbying by the Vatican. Roman Catholic countries are trying to use the conference as an ideological platform, to have set out in black and white positions that have little to do with a global family health programme and more to do with an ideological standpoint. I remind my hon. Friend that my noble Friend Lady Chalker told the Royal Society:

"I understand the position that the Catholic Church, for example, takes on what they describe as artificial methods of birth control. But by the same token, no single group should seek to prevent the Cairo declaration and Action Plan reflecting the majority view on the importance of everybody having access to adequate reproductive health care."

That is a substantial position, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will stand by it. I will be interested to hear his comments.

Everybody's views on abortion are well known. At such a conference, one cannot have in the final declaration a statement that sets out a position on abortion that is contrary to national law. On one hand, we have those opposed to abortion; on the other, those who are—in one form or another—supportive of it. The two are irreconcilable. I hope that the draft declaration will incorporate wording that acknowledges differences of opinion.

Other issues that need to be addressed are adolescence and the definition of reproductive health. In all that, I urge my hon. Friend to work closely with the United States, which I believe can be a firm ally to us at the conference.

One of the interesting things has been the emergence of the role of non-governmental organisations in the preparation of the summit, several hundred of which have attended the PrepCom conference. I draw the attention of the House to the role played by two NGOs in particular: Population Concern, and Marie Stopes International. The latter pioneered the social marketing programme in certain parts of the world and recently introduced a first-class briefing pack, which I commend to my hon. Friend.

There is a slow shift of opinion among the NGOs towards recognising that the issue is very important. They have in the past tended to shy away from it. I was quite delighted yesterday to receive a briefing pack from Christian Aid in preparation for the debate. I am rather flattered that it should be focused on my Adjournment debate. It shows that there is growing interest in the issue.

I give my support to the proposed chairman of the conference, Mr. Fred Sai. I hope that he will be in the chair. He is well known to many hon. Members. He chaired the May committee in 1984. He is also a specialist in health, nutrition and family planning. I seek the assurance of my hon. Friend that the Government will support him.

I urge my hon. Friend to continue funding research into new and modern technological advances in contraception which might be appropriate to the 1990s, rather than what is now recognised as the slightly outdated contraceptive methods of the 1960s. I recognise the hard work that has been done on the conference by Overseas Development Administration officials, particularly Mr. David Nabarro. I pay tribute to my noble Friend Baroness Chalker and also to my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), who was the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs —a position now occupied by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury—who, for the past couple of years, has spoken for the ODA in the House and taken a keen interest in the subject.

This is the best last chance that we have to try to stabilise the world population. If we can stabilise it at 10 billion by 2025, rather than the projected 15 billion, we will all have achieved something worth while.

8.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottoway) on initiating the debate. He has a long-standing and informed interest in this important subject and I know that he has taken a keen interest in it since he has been a Member of the House, and long before.

The Government agree with my hon. Friend on the importance of the international conference on population

which will be held in Cairo. We agree with him on the importance of getting the right result from it. Indeed, some of us—as he does, I am sure—see it as the most important international conference of the decade.

Our objectives for the conference are quite straightforward. We want all women and men to be able to access good-quality family planning and reproductive health services. By "all", we mean sexually active adolescents as well as adults, poor as well as rich, country dwellers as well as those in the towns and cities. We know that between 100 million and 200 million couples cannot access those services. We know that the services available for many millions of others are either of poor quality or far too expensive. We know that if services were more widely available, they would be used. We know, too, that when the services are used, fertility rates and population growth rates fall. We have seen that transformation occur in Bangladesh and Kenya, and have supported it with selective use of British aid funds.

We are seeing the transformation begin in other parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The requirement is quite simply to ensure that the services are there. That means that at Cairo we will encourage all Governments to commit themselves to offer family planning and reproductive health services. We want people to be able to access a choice of family planning methods, including natural family planning. We want to improve the safety of motherhood and childbirth, with better quality midwifery and obstetric services. We want women and men to have easy access to services that treat and prevent sexually transmitted infections; we want to help to reduce the consequences of genital mutilation and other forms of sexual violence.

Governments, of course, must decide what levels of service should be available for their people and what proportion of the national budget should be invested in them. They must decide how the services will be provided, using private-sector providers when they are more efficient and effective than the public sector. Local culture and sensitivity will determine the exact mix of services to be offered and the way in which they are made available.

We are against any coercion of people to use or not to use particular kinds of family planning service. We are against prescribing the services that can and cannot be offered. But we encourage Governments to take account of what happens when people cannot have access to family planning services—of the 200,000 women who die each year as a result of unsafe abortions; of the hundreds of thousands of children born to parents who do not want them and often cannot afford to clothe and feed them; and of the inevitable disruption of development programmes and, indeed, of the entire environment that results from rapid population growth.

It would be extraordinary if the Cairo conference were not a success. Most Governments, particularly those of developing countries, have adopted population policies and are busy implementing them. In 1965, only nine developing countries had policies to promote family planning and reduce their rates of population growth. More and more couples now choose when to have children, and practise family planning—an estimated 10 per cent. did so in 1960; 50 per cent. do so now. Considerable strides have been made in recent years. Those who keep us informed of what is happening in the wider world—the non-governmental organisation and advocacy groups, with which my hon. Friend is so closely associated—seem to agree that action taken now will determine whether the world's population stabilises at 12 billion or 18 billion during the first century of the next millennium.

We are working with the United Nations and others to ensure that the conference is a success. Dr. Nafis Sadik, head of the UN Population Fund and secretary general of the conference, has tirelessly travelled the world preparing the ground for success. She has spoken to the leaders of developing countries, academic groups and scientists, donor organisations and colleagues in the United Nations system. She is ably supported by Dr. Fred Sai, a highly experienced and committed Ghanaian, who will preside over the conference and in whom we have total confidence.

The Egyptian Government are providing excellent facilities for the 20,000 or so participants, many of whom will be representing non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups. Most delegations will be headed by Ministers; I am delighted to say that ours will be ably led by my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker. I agree with everything that my hon. Friend said about her excellent speech the other day on "Children by Choice, not Chance". I am also delighted that my hon. Friend himself will be joining the group of experienced officials and non-governmental organisation representatives who will be on our delegation.

My hon. Friend asked specifically about targets. The targets in the draft Cairo plan of action are acceptable to us and we will apply ODA funds to help recipient Governments to adapt them to their circumstances and achieve those targets. We are completely committed to that. Indeed, our commitment to the subject generally has been well illustrated by the fact that the amount that we have spent directly on population and reproductive health has increased each year since 1991 and more than doubled between 1986 and 1993. At present, we are spending just over £31 million. Further funds go towards education projects specifically aimed at women and other poverty-focused programmes that will create a climate within which people can adopt family planning measures.

The UN has arranged preparatory meetings that have been well attended by delegations from all over the world. The discussion was intense. The British delegation, as a member of the European Union, played a major part. We have helped to shape the draft plan of action for the Cairo conference and we continue to work behind the scenes, strengthening the common European Union line and negotiating with care to ensure that contentious passages will be acceptable to the vast majority of delegates. The action plan, full of realistic and sensible objectives, is one of which we can be proud, which we can support and which we expect to be agreed, with acclamation, in Cairo.

We have discussed with UNFPA—the United Nations Population Fund—the World bank and other agencies mechanisms to follow up the conference. We propose an enhanced role for the UNFPA, working in co-ordination with other major groups, and we confidently expect our proposals to be accepted.

There are a few countries whose delegations have expressed fundamental objections to improving access to family planning and reproductive health services. I understand that they are concerned about the increased availability of what they described as artificial methods of birth control. They are concerned that there will be easier availability of facilities for induced abortion. They fear that such actions will encourage promiscuity and, in the longer term, undermine the sanctity of the family.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

That is not new. At the 1974 Bucharest conference and in 1984 in Mexico, a proportion of the delegations took that line. Compared with then, the number of dissenting voices has reduced dramatically. The 12 or so delegations that do not take the majority line are expressing their concerns in strident language, accusing the majority of an inhuman and immoral stance. They are entitled to their view, but they should recognise that it is a minority view and one which is unlikely to impede the majority world view from prevailing. We are in dialogue with the minority group. We should prefer to see a declaration that is adopted unanimously or at least by a broad consensus. We should not wish to see voting on the plan of action, as that would be seen as divisive.

During the forthcoming parliamentary recess, my officials and representatives of non-governmental organisations will be working hard with their European colleagues to ensure that the meeting in Cairo will be a success and will herald intensified action in population and reproductive health. They will go to Cairo in the knowledge that Britain has played a leading role in advocacy and action in this important area. They will go knowing that there is strong support for their work from both sides of the House. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South will be joining them and I look forward to hearing his report when we return in the autumn. We wish him and the conference success, because the price of failure will be measured not by us but by future generations. We must succeed for their sake.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 July 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Causing Death by Driving

9.34 am

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I wish to present a petition to the House on behalf of my constituents Colin and Margaret Gorton, the parents of Gary Gorton deceased. The petition

Showeth

That their son, Gary, aged four years and 10 months, was killed on Friday 20 August 1993 in Fir Grove, Beech Hill, Wigan when he was run over twice by a customised Toyota pick-up truck, as he was sat on the pavement.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do call upon the Government to change the Law when a driver's negligence or unlawful action causes the death of a person. In all cases the driver must be charged with an offence of 'Causing Death by Driving', and the charge must carry a mandatory ban and an advanced re-test. This charge should replace the present 'Causing Death' charge and should be added to a manslaughter charge where appropriate.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray that this petition be received.

To lie upon the Table.

Hunting

9.35 am

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I should like to present a petition signed by 15,000 people in response to changes in the law in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. It reads:

The Petition of members and supporters of the campaign to ban hunting, Declares that compassion should not be criminalised by measures proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill that will restrict the democratic right of people to peacefully demonstrate against hunting.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons allows the opportunity for a vote to legislate against hunting rather than those who protest against it.

And the petitioners remain etc.

To lie upon the Table.

VAT (Fuel)

9.36 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I have a petition from Frank King of Eckington and 923 residents of the area. Mr. King is concerned about value added tax. He is doubly concerned about its being placed on standing charges and he has my complete support in this matter. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of the residents of Eckington and District in Derbyshire showeth that the placing of value added tax upon the standing charges for gas and electricity fuel bills is particularly unjust, as such charges are a fixed amount and cannot even be controlled by limiting a person's fuel consumption and that this places a particularly harsh burden upon those residents who live upon pensions, fixed benefits and low incomes. Wherefore your Petitioners, as in duty bound pray that your Honourable House will take measures to remove the burden of value added tax on standing charges.

And your petitioners, so in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Sutton Coldfield (Schools)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.37 am

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): I believe that this is the first Adjournment debate that I have raised for 20 years. After a long spell away trying to provide answers, I get back to the serious business of asking questions. I raise this subject, the position of schools in Sutton Coldfield, against the background of good schools, excellent head teachers, dedicated staff, good results and close working relations between parents and schools. In those circumstances, one might ask what problems there are to be tackled.

The first and most intractable problem arises from the very success of the schools—in particular, the secondary schools. The problem is the scarcity of school places which, each year for the past two or three years, has caused concern and anxiety for children who have been refused places and for the parents of those children.

I shall demonstrate the point. According to Birmingham city council education department, its three schools—Arthur Terry, Plantsbrook and John Willmott—were all considerably over-subscribed this year. The position this year is not much different from previous years. This year, at Arthur Terry there were almost 400 first-preference applicants for 240 places. At John Willmott, there were 398 first-preference applicant for 210 places. At Plantsbrook, there were 335 first-preference applicants for 210 places.

In practice, that meant that siblings living within three miles of schools were given preference and then those living closest to the schools were given preference. Under the rules, many children were excluded. Thus, at Arthur Terry, one of the best schools in Sutton Coldfield, the last child admitted at the time of the allocation lived two and a half miles from the school. A child who lived beyond that limit was excluded.

A boy who lived 2.8 miles away was initially excluded under the allocation, although I am glad to say that, due to movement on the waiting list, the problem has been rectified. Other children were not so swiftly accommodated. Of course, if they failed in their first preference because of the distance limit, there was no chance with their second and third preferences, because other schools' first preferences were already over-subscribed. That has continued over the past three years and it has caused distress and concern for parents and children alike. A parent in my constituency wrote to me.

"I now face the prospect of uncertainty over the next three months and I can sense the growing anxiety this situation is causing my son, as unlike many of the pupils in his school he continues to be unsure about which school he is going to go to in September."

That is one quote among dozens over the past three years. No one who has been, as I have, to parents' meetings can fail to recognise the emotion that the subject raises. In 1992, when the problem first arose, I called an impromptu meeting at literally 48 hours' notice. The meeting could scarcely be well advertised—it was not well advertised—but on a Saturday afternoon Sutton Coldfield town hall was filled with anxious parents. That gives some flavour of the concern over the past three years in my constituency.

I pay tribute to all the efforts that have been made to alleviate the problem. Because of the efforts of headmasters, the local education department and Department for Education representatives whom I have met on several occasions over the year, some of the worst results have been alleviated. There has been nail-biting concern until the last moment, but, over the past two or three years, we have scrambled through. Indeed, at the moment what was once a long waiting list is now down to about 25 Sutton Coldfield children who are still without local education authority places for September. That is still a substantial number, and I hope that the problem will be solved in the coming month.

Does that long and worrying process need to continue year after year? It has taken place since 1992. Does it have to be the case for the rest of the decade and into the next century? Can we reach a better position? Above all, can children in my constituency be assured of a place at the school of their choice in the constituency? That is what I aim at.

Changes are being introduced. On the recommendation of head teachers, the timetable for offering places has been brought forward. Last year, places were allocated on 22 April, and now they will be allocated at the end of January or early February. In addition, in the past, parents had to submit their choice by Christmas. This year, for 1995, they will have to return their choice cards by the end of September. Greater information is being given to parents to help them with their choice of school. For example, they will be told the allocation patterns over the past two years and they will be warned of difficulties with the popularity of certain schools. Those are very useful steps. I pay tribute to them—I have no criticism whatsoever. They will certainly assist administration.

But there is a more fundamental problem. One of the reasons for the problems that we face in Sutton Coldfield is that, because of the good reputations of the schools, parents from other parts of Birmingham and from elsewhere wish to send their children to those schools. It was once a minor issue, but in 1992, when the problem started, the age of transfer in Sutton Coldfield, which was 12, went down to 11. With that change in the age of transfer, which was good for all kinds of educational reasons, came various problems.

If it is to be the policy that children from other areas can go to schools in Sutton Coldfield because of their quality and reputation, there must be an adequate number of places to meet such demand. It would serve no one if that were not the case. It would certainly serve absolutely no one if children who are unsuccessful have to travel miles out of their local area, away from their friends, to other schools.

I pay tribute to the Government. I have been to the Department for Education on several occasions. I am grateful to the Government for giving the go-ahead earlier this year for some important capital projects—for example, at Arthur Terry where capacity is now being expanded. I welcome that development—I fought for it, and I was grateful that Ministers acted on it. I am glad to note that work is proceeding literally at this moment at John Willmott. Again, that is very welcome news. Six new classrooms are being created. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that work on the next six classrooms next year will also be approved.

Above all, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm a point of policy. Because there might be a case for reducing provision in some other parts of Birmingham—Birmingham is not the only city with the problem; it is a wider issue—such policy should not prevent the expansion

of schools where there is proven and obvious public demand for schools in other areas. One of the most dispiriting things for parents is to be told to send their children five or six miles to another area because there are spare places there. That is not a policy of choice. A policy of choice allows the development of popular and successful schools to meet public demand. That is what our policy should be.

That policy was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) in his circular of 22 June. I will, in passing, pay tribute to the former Secretary of State for Education who achieved a great deal in his time at the Department for Education and with whom I always very much enjoyed working. One of his most successful policies was set out in a consultative circular on 22 June on choice and diversity for new school places, which he called "Putting Quality First".

My right hon. Friend's policy was that, in line with the parents charter, the views of parents should be given full weight when proposals on school provision are made. The Secretary of State must always consider carefully the educational, as well as the financial and organisational, merits of any proposals. The consultative document stated that the criteria for approving new school places should be in the interests of quality, and that the Secretary of State for Education will approve new school places where there is no shortage of places.

That was a very important statement and it took forward the popular schools initiative of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) when he was Secretary of State for Education. Will my hon. Friend the Minister today confirm that that remains the policy of the Government?

One further point concerns me about the question of capacity, and this also concerns Conservative councillors in Sutton Coldfield and an organisation called PANIC, which was set up to deal with the problem of capacity and of children being refused places. The point that concerns me is whether expanding existing schools is a sufficient policy in itself. In other words, does there come a point when expansion cannot be taken any further?

We are probably coming to the limits of the natural capacity of the existing schools in Sutton Coldfield. For example, by September 1995, John Willmott will be taking 1,200 children and I doubt whether it can accommodate any more. The question that then arises is whether a new school can be provided in Sutton Coldfield and, if so, how it can be done.

We know that the pupil population will grow, on average, by about 14 per cent. during the next decade. We can guess that an area such as Sutton Coldfield, on the outskirts of a major conurbation, will be one of the areas where school population will rise as housing development continues. What should be the course? The circular to which I have referred describes the prospects of new grant-maintained schools being created.

The prospect of grant-maintained schools holds no terrors for those of us in Sutton Coldfield. Fairfax is grant-maintained, and, more interestingly, Walmley junior and infant schools are grant-maintained. I visited those schools last Friday and even from a short visit the high morale and the pride that they take in the fact that they are now running their own show was clear. There are no terrors for us with grant-maintained schools.

I should be grateful if the Minister could set out the plans for that area, the criteria by which new schools can be created, the prospects for the creation of such new schools and the time scale about which we are talking.

There are two other issues that I wish to touch on briefly. Although available places is the major problem, I also wish to refer to the problem of the maintenance provision in our schools. I mentioned grant-maintained Walmley school a moment ago. The only complaint there is about the quality of buildings that that school has inherited. That is not a product of the past one or two years, but of year after year of neglect by the local education authority which has not spent the money that has been necessary on maintaining the fabric of the schools.

As happened all too often in the past, the authority cut the capital programme when it should have maintained it by a step-by-step programme. I shall give examples. Walmley now has 370 children in the junior school and 250 in the infant school. It inherited buildings which are in urgent need of renovation on the outside, which have not been painted for years, where repairs have been put off and where buildings have been neglected. In some cases, children are still using huts which have long since outlived their usefulness.

The process has occurred over a long period and the responsibility for it undoubtedly rests with the LEA. But the responsibility now, as far the grant-maintained school is concerned, rests with the Department. The proper maintenance of buildings may not be an obviously striking popular education issue and it is not necessarily an issue which has detained education conference after education conference. Yet when maintenance is neglected, the working environment for children and teachers is poorer than it need be. That is doubly frustrating when everything else in the school is going well. Anyone who wants to see an example of the process should go to Walmley or to my second example in Sutton Coldfield, Mere Green combined school, where the same evidence is on show.

Mere Green brings me to pre-school provision, the third and last point that I wish to raise about schools in my constituency. Mere Green is another excellent school which is now providing nursery education for just over 100 children. There is no doubt about the need for that provision and Mere Green has shown what can be done. I congratulate the school on that and I hope that it will continue to be supported by the local education authority.

In the coming months, the Government will want to develop plans as a result of the consideration that is now being given to the nursery area. It is an issue of importance and I hope that my hon. Friend might say a word or two on it. I recognise that there are cost restraints; it would be foolish not to do so, but we need a path forward in this area.

I have raised three issues—the lack of places, the physical state of schools and nursery provision, of which the most urgent is the places issue. I do not want to see the same problem, year after year, of worried and concerned children and teachers. The only way forward is to support the expansion of popular schools and consider the building of new schools. I recognise that when there are surplus places in an LEA area, difficulties which will be created. However, that is a separate issue and the Government should expand the popular schools to which parents want to send their children.

It brings no comfort to anyone that children must travel miles out of their own home area to find school places. The Government should encourage good schools and give

[Sir Norman Fowler]

children the opportunity of as good an education as possible. Sutton Coldfield has an excellent range of schools by any standards. That it is good news and is what the Government's education policy is all about, but their success brings with it the problem of attracting to those schools children from a wide area, and that needs to be addressed. The Government should support schools that are popular because of the excellent education which they provide.

9.58 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir Norman Fowler) on securing this debate on a topic which is of great importance to him and has a wider resonance in the House. On the day when he can be seen to quit the front firing line of public life, we as a country owe him a great debt of gratitude for his contribution as a Secretary of State in the past. In his party capacity, we are grateful to him for his work as party chairman.

My right hon. Friend warned the House that it is some 20 years since he launched an Adjournment debate. I see no diminution in his force or eloquence in raising this matter on behalf of his constituents. They should be grateful to him for raising matters of considerable importance to Sutton Coldfield and of wider national importance. From the reports that I have from officials, I fully understand my right hon. Friend's concern that the excellent standards that pertain generally in Sutton Coldfield should be maintained and encouraged. Indeed, other areas need to raise themselves to those standards.

My right hon. Friend rightly identified salient areas of interest, which I shall deal with during my remarks. If he feels that anything has been elided or compressed, I hope that he will feel that he can come back to me on it. We have listened carefully and will reflect on the points that he has made.

If I might give a little historic context, the background to the issue was the change from 12-plus to 11-plus in 1992, which has created another year group in the schools in Sutton Coldfield. I fully understand the important point that my right hon. Friend makes: that, as capacity shortens, the capacity to deliver choice at the margin diminishes rather more quickly. He has explained that in relation to the schools that he mentioned, and the data that I have confirm it.

Therefore, it would be most effective for the House if I answer the debate by explaining the general position of Government policy, as it bears on the points that my right hon. Friend made. This is a most welcome opportunity for us to restate the Government's commitment to increasing choice, quality and diversity in all schools, whatever their local education authority, to draw attention to what has been done to date and to explain some of our plans for the future.

Improving quality and choice in education underpins all the Government's education reforms. My right hon. Friend may not know that last week I spoke to the Council of Local Education Authorities in Wolverhampton and emphasised our common objectives and the importance of all authorities—for example, the LEA for its maintained schools, the Funding Agency for Schools and the Government—working together to deliver quality and choice. It is a progressive policy. It takes time to fulfil. If, perhaps, I cannot give my right hon. Friend all the immediate assurance that he requires, he will understand.

We have an impressive record on expanding the choice of school to meet the wishes of parents. We attach enormous importance to parents being able, so far as possible—that is a necessary qualification—to send their children to the school of their choice. In the Education Act 1980, some way back now, we gave parents the right to express a choice among local schools—something which they had been denied previously. We gave them a right to appeal if they felt that the wrong decision had been taken. That provided an important second bite of the cherry.

Since that time, parents have been able to apply to any maintained school, and the admission authority—the governing body of a grant-maintained school or a voluntary-aided school and the LEA in other cases—has to comply with their preference unless the pupils do not meet the academic standard for selective education or do not satisfy the religious requirements for entry to the school, so that the religious character of the school would not be preserved.

The more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 reinforced the measures in the 1980 Act and were designed to extend choice of school. More open enrolment—MOE in the trade—and pupil-led funding under local management of schools—LMS—give all schools an incentive to attract and retain pupils by responding positively to parental concern for good-quality education. As it were, money follows the pupils.

More open enrolment was designed to eliminate artificial admissions limits. It ensured that schools admitted up to the school's standard number or any higher admissions number set. Bringing admissions more into line with the capacity of a school made it easier for parents to gain the school of their choice.

My right hon. Friend touched on the important point that local education authorities could no longer justify keeping admissions down at popular schools to prop up the less popular schools. On that point, I can give my right hon. Friend a clear assurance. We simply cannot accept that parental choice should be frustrated in that way. If a school is popular and there is space, a pupil has to be admitted, even if it means exposing the fact that an unpopular school is indeed unpopular, and has low intakes as a result.

To continue the story of development, in 1993 the Government took further action, as promised under the parents charter, to strengthen parents' rights in the appeals process. All appeals committees must now have a lay member, and the rules are such that representatives of the school governing body or the LEA can no longer be in a majority. Admission authorities must advertise for people willing to serve as lay members. The result is that parents who take their cases to appeal can have renewed confidence. The appeal will be heard fairly and impartially, and the appeal committee will take a balanced decision between the needs of the child and the implications for the school. Despite the difficulties that we all recognise in Sutton Coldfield, where the position has developed from a large number of dissatisfied parents of pupils towards a reducing, but, I accept, still significant number, the admissions policy and, I hope, the appeals process are working.

No less important was the publication in July 1993 of our circular 6/93 "Admissions to maintained schools". It set out for admission authorities their duties and responsibilities, but it also went much further. For the first time, schools and LEAs were given some clear guidance, derived from best practice, on what type of approach and which varieties of admissions criteria were desirable and which were not.

The basic message was clear, and was again based on citizens charter principles: parents should be able to see and understand without difficulty how an LEA or school would decide which children to admit before they stated their preference. I sympathise with the points that my right hon. Friend has made about proper information to parents. They should be able to have some idea of their chance of success. In particular, it was important that there should be clear, objective criteria for over-subscription—in other words, how a school would decide between competing claims when places were limited in a way that was fair and objective and so that everyone understood what was going on.

We have also helped to open up schools through the publication of performance and truancy data and reports under the new inspection system so that parents know how schools are doing. That can help inform their choice. That is part of our overall approach to quality.

Improvements in the way in which children are admitted to schools and in giving parents a real say in the outcome have been accompanied, of course, by a significant and continuing increase in the choice and diversity of school provision from which parents can choose. The first grant-maintained school was opened in 1989, only five years ago; now there are almost 1,000. There are 15 city technology colleges, and now 25 technology colleges, and more on the way. I note in passing that there is only one secondary and one primary grant-maintained school in Sutton Coldfield. I shall come back to that in a moment.

Of course, not all parents have or, perhaps more important, consider that they have a genuine choice to make. In some areas, parents may feel that there is only one good school—all others are second best, some are worse than that. But things are moving in the right direction and I believe that, as quality and standards improve in school, more and more parents will be happy with the prospect of sending their child to a school other than their first preference—although, by definition, first preference is best.

My right hon. Friend asked about some schools being allowed to expand. He referred to the launch last month of the new circular on the supply of school places. It was carefully considered by my colleagues, but it remains a consultative circular. I cannot anticipate its final form until consultation is complete. It marks another milestone in the progressive drive to raise standards in our schools.

In what we describe as our new settlement for education, we set out the basis for the development of schools policy over the next few years. We are taking a much closer interest in quality and standards than our predecessors have ever done in the era since the Butler education legislation 50 years ago. Securing the right supply of high-quality school places is a key part of that picture. The key objective is not quantity but quality. Population growth to the end of the decade means that nationally we will need more new places in our schools. We must ensure that they are high-quality places.

The circular to which I referred sets out the new framework for the organisation of schools to deliver higher quality, allied with, and in no sense incompatible with, more choice and diversity. The role of the new Funding Agency for Schools is set out in the circular. The agency is a key part of the new framework. As more than 10 per cent. of Birmingham's secondary pupils are educated in schools other than maintained schools, the funding agency has shared responsibility with the LEA for planning educational provision, and the opportunity to work together to ensure that demand for school places is met effectively.

My right hon. Friend mentioned promoting new schools. The circular provides guidance on a new type of school to be described as grant maintained with promoters. There is already much interest and we look forward to well-founded proposals from promoters to help increase quality, choice and diversity. It may be helpful to my right hon. Friend if I make it clear that all proposals will be considered by Ministers on their individual merits against a number of criteria. Of course, the need for places and parental demand will be important considerations.

The Secretary of State will, however, consider approving proposals for new capacity in areas of surplus where it would add to quality, choice and diversity and where there is scope for subsequent rationalisation. Other factors will include suitability of premises, qualifications of teachers, ability to meet the requirements of the national curriculum and other relevant factors. We are moving very much in the direction that my right hon. Friend would like.

The circular also makes it clear that, under certain circumstances, approval may be given for new school places, even when there is no expected shortfall in capacity. It will be considered, in particular, in schools where the new places will significantly enhance the objectives of quality, choice and diversity and where they could be matched by withdrawals of excess places at other schools.

The need for new places in an area will continue to be a key factor in decisions about whether to approve new capacity. We would expect it to be improved in the absence of a shortfall only in a minority of cases where there is clear evidence of improved choice, diversity and quality and the scope for rationalisation to which I referred. It is an important modification of the traditional approach, but obviously it does not go totally in the opposite direction.

Alongside the drive to raise quality, we will continue to seek the removal of unnecessary surplus places. That is an important objective for all LEAs and my right hon. Friend referred to it in the context of Birmingham.

We believe that resources available to education must be spent first and foremost on pupils and not unnecessary buildings. Of course, some surplus may be justified—for parental choice and to preserve access to village schools, for example—but wherever practical, expensive excess places should be removed and the circular sets out a new streamlined procedure for achieving that.

My right hon. Friend expressed concern about the state of school buildings in Birmingham. That is primarily the responsibility of the LEA. The Wragg report has been published and he knows about that. It is well documented that some schools have had less spend on their fabric and repairs than they might have and that has been proper cause for parental concern. I am glad that the city council has recently decided to increase the amount that it spends on education.

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

A third vital area that my right hon. Friend mentioned was nursery education. He is aware that the Government would like to see a widening of nursery and other pre-school provision as resources become available. We are exploring ways, as resources allow, of making pre-school provision more widely available to those children who do not at present benefit. No decisions can be taken on statutory proposals until the outcome of the Government's current review is known, but we hope to keep further delay to a minimum.

I am sure that hon. Members will agree that we have a progressive and impressive record of expanding choice and diversity and trying to meet the needs of parents. Our aims must continue to be the same as those of my right hon. Friend—to meet the real desires and demands of parents. I hope that the measures that we have taken and can take in conjunction with local authorities and, as appropriate, the Funding Agency for Schools, will go some way towards alleviating the problems in Sutton Coldfield and benefiting parents and the pupils in the schools.

In concluding my remarks on an important topic, I thank my right hon. Friend for raising it and use the opportunity to express to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my right hon. Friend, all hon. Members present and the staff my best wishes for a good rest during the vacation break and an interesting and, I hope, constructive autumn term.

Minibus Safety

10.15 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It must be much more difficult to be a parent now than at any time in our history, not least because, in addition to the normal problems that face every mother and father, there are modern hazards which did not exist when I was young, or even when my children were young.

My daughter recently decided that it was not in the interests of her child to travel in the minibus provided by the school for a long school journey. She took him in the car, deposited him at the place, picked him up and brought him away. That raised a number of issues that I discussed with her.

First, she was lucky in that she had some form of transport—it is somewhat beaten up but it works—to which many mothers do not have access. Secondly, it is clear from the statistics that children are slightly more at risk in a car than in a minibus. Thirdly, what effect would there be on the already very stringent limitations on children's time and life if they are eternally unable to take part in various activities because they cannot get there or because the transport available is substandard?

We shall have to confront the problem with much more vigour. The Government have known for some time now that parents all over the country are concerned about minibuses. The issue is highlighted by the terrible accidents that occur from time to time. It is all very well to say that statistically there are very few, but for any parent who loses a child in a motorway accident, the loss is irreparable and the damage is so frightening that for the rest of the parents it becomes a matter of great and active concern.

We now have to do a great deal more than say simply that we want to talk about seat belts with the European Community and see what we can do to change the rules. Those of us who take an interest in these matters remember that when there was discussion within the European Community about changing the way in which buses were used, minibuses, which are a strong feature of voluntary life in Britain, were exempted because British Ministers said—at the time with some justification—that simply to bring in a restriction which made it impossible for people to use minibuses would wipe out large numbers of school and voluntary activities for such groups as scout troops, guides and the mentally handicapped.

Many people use minibuses, but they are not ideal and the dangers are very real. It is extraordinary that anyone with an ordinary driving licence can drive a minibus and be in control of 14 young lives—let us not be mealy-mouthed about it: they could be the lives of people in any age group. Anyone can do that on a voluntary basis. There is no control on the number of hours that a driver may work. A schoolteacher or a voluntary worker could thus have done a full day's work and then had to make a long journey driving a minibus. Urgent action must therefore be taken to impose strict laws.

One thing is always certain about Conservative Governments: Transport Ministers change jobs with the speed of light. A former Transport Minister, just before he left office, announced that we would apply to the Community for some controls over seat belts—but he went no further than that. He did not say how that would be paid for, or what extra controls were needed; and he did not say

that he was prepared to talk to voluntary bodies to find a way of putting these changes into operation as soon as possible.

If the Government are serious, there are a number of rule changes that they must rapidly bring before the House —not in a year's time or in three years' time, if that happens to fit in with the Community. I should like measures announced in the Queen's Speech and implemented in the coming year.

The charter for minibuses points up some of the measures that those who work continually in the voluntary sector believe should be incorporated in any new system. The Community Transport Association, which relies almost wholly on minibuses, has given a great deal of thought to the matter and has identified the more important aspects of it. It recommends, for instance, that all seats be forward facing; there is clear evidence that bench seats are dangerous. Seats should be high-backed or incorporate protection for the head and neck so that people do not suffer from whiplash, which costs the national health service a lot of money and causes a great deal of pain to those who suffer from it.

There should be a minimum width of seat. Seats should be securely fixed to the floor by systems stronger than seat belt anchorages. Each seat should be fitted with a height-adjustable lap and diagonal seat belt. Those of us who have spent much of our lives dealing with accidents and emergencies know only too well the damage that can be done by the wrong kind of seat belt.

Seat belts and anchorages should comply with the specifications ECE14 and ECE16 for vehicles in category M2—that is to say, buses with a maximum gross weight not exceeding 5,000 kg. Regulations require seat belts and anchorages to pass a static test that will provide crash protection. The group also went on to discuss the need to keep gangways clear and to have usable exits.

The Community Transport Association also considered some of the minibuses on our roads. Neil Buxton, co-ordinator of Thamesdown community transport, told a conference recently that one of the minibuses brought to him for a safety audit had been donated to a local boys football club; it had an exposed metal handbrake, only one rear door in working condition and no emergency front exit. He also came across other less dramatic cases, but this one highlighted the fact that many children are being carried around the countryside in vehicles that are not in very good condition. These days many schools have had to give up their playing fields, and children in ordinary state schools have to be conveyed long distances just to take part in team games.

There is also the question of driver training. It is horrifying that anyone can get in and start driving a minibus—anyone with a licence, that is. I believe that the Government should insist on proper training for people who want to undertake this sort of job. They should examine closely whether people know what is involved, whether they have been properly trained and whether they are capable of doing the job. The Government should also consider the rules governing the number of hours people can drive. Fatigue kills, and in a minibus it kills more people at a time.

There are a great many straightforward ideas that the Government could implement rapidly if they were serious about this matter. I am worried about other factors, too, that have a direct impact on road safety. The Government say that they want to do something about saving lives and improving road safety. We must take them at their word. It is therefore difficult to understand why the things that they do not seem to chime with the things that they say.

Because of the pressures being brought to bear on police forces, many of them are doing away with their traffic divisions. Those units are not there just to irritate motorists by stopping them when they speed, for example. They are trained to look carefully at road vehicles and to assess road accidents and how much the state of a vehicle contributes to those accidents. If we dissipate this expertise by making many more policemen generalists and fewer of them specialists, standards will inevitably be lowered. Cheshire did away with its traffic police several months ago. I call that a backward step.

The Government have taken the conscious decision to privatise the Transport Research Laboratory. Anyone who has been involved for as long as I have in transport matters will know that the expertise of that laboratory contributed to the fact that we have seat belts at all. Car manufacturers were not exactly fighting to put in extra safety gadgets when the campaign for seat belts began. It was the work done by the scientists at the TRL that produced the information and the specifications used by the Government when they introduced seat belt laws. Privatising the unit is one thing; handing it over to people who want to make a profit will inevitably diminish the amount and quality of research done on safety. No longer will road safety, vehicle safety or the safety of road surfaces be investigated as thoroughly and as independently as before. The Minister would be foolish to suggest otherwise.

We are also concerned about coaches. Many children are taken to school sitting three abreast on seats designed for two. That may be cheaper for whoever happens to win the contract; it may please education authorities whose budgets are already under pressure. But the fact is that it puts children at risk and it should not be allowed.

The Government have moved away from the enforcement of safeguards in respect of vehicles. I have been questioning the Government for some considerable time about all these matters, because I have been so frightened by some of the statistics that are handed out. Easing up on enforcement and cutting the numbers of specialists will inevitably affect the amount of care available for people who use our road surfaces.

When I read the statistics for my region I became exceedingly worried. The vehicle inspectorate is supposed to carry out roadside vehicle safety spot checks—a task it does well. It monitors private car and light goods vehicle Ministry of Transport schemes and, with the police, it investigates accidents. It considers operator licensing maintenance arrangements. All those tasks are essential in considering road transport. I have seen spot checks carried out on a multi-agency basis and I was impressed by the quality of the tests carried out by both the Metropolitan police and other agencies.

I asked the Department of Transport for the statistics on the number of vehicles inspected throughout Britain and the percentage that were found to be defective. The figures that I received from the Minister were alarming. In the north-west, for example, 38,264 vehicles were inspected and 34 per cent. of them were found to be defective. "Defective" is a nice umbrella word that covers many dangerous defects. The table provided by the Minister showed that 4,982 vehicles had defective tires; 2,195 vehicles had defective wheels; 2,864 vehicles had oil leaks; and 1,669 had steering defects. The Department's

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

own statistics should be a matter of great concern. Far from cutting the number of people who enforce vehicle inspections, we should be increasing it.

There are clear signs that, in their drive to save money, the Government are cutting at every level services that protect the consumer and the passenger. Traffic area offices are responsible for the issue and monitoring of goods and public service operator licences. They are helped by the vehicle inspectorate and they were set up so that standards could be controlled and enforced. Their budgets have already been cut by £406,000 in the past two years and further cuts are expected in the next two years. In Edinburgh and Cardiff, two of the network offices will be shut.

All that together inevitably puts people more at risk. The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will remove a lot of protection for people who think that all vehicles are safe and efficient. It is clear that the proposal to issue an operator's licence for life will have an effect. At the moment, people are brought back and checks are made, but if someone receives an operator's licence for life, nothing like the same degree of control will be available to the Department. We are told that the habit will be developed whereby responsibility for licensing will be handed over to dealers. That will be a retrograde and expensive step if people discover that they can cheat the Inland Revenue even more.

Continuous licensing will mean that review processes will weaken and that more rogue operators will slip through the licensing net. Whichever way one looks at it, that will mean lower standards in the road network, and those standards are the only protection for the average member of the public.

People outside the House would be prepared to support the Government if they were to instigate an energetic scheme to consider road safety, particularly in relation to the conveyance of children in minibuses. They do not want to be told that, because of the constraints of the European Community, they will have to wait until 1996 and that, although the Government will do something, it will apply only to children and not to other groups. They will want to know why the Government are not calling together all the voluntary bodies and finding some means of helping them to fund essential changes. If there were real political will, that could be done.

One has to consider only that the Department of Transport has thrown money away on consultants to know that money is available in the public purse, but that the political will is lacking. There should be some means of saying to voluntary bodies, "If you carry people, would you be prepared to talk to us about the means of setting up a funding scheme that would enable you, either by interest-free loans or some other some practical method, not only to modernise your vehicles, but to ensure that they are safe and useful?" I would have thought that the commercial aspect might have concerned the Government. Such a proposal would generate much work in the industry, but it is saving lives that concerns me.

It is not enough to say that, over a particular period, road deaths decreased and there were fewer accidents involving minibuses. More and more people are carried by minibuses as public transport becomes expensive or non-existent. In rural areas, if one wants to take children, old people or a specialist group to some activity, one has to provide the transport, which is expensive and frequently causes worry. For the best reasons in the world, such transport is not properly monitored and controlled.

I do not want draconian measures to be pushed without consultation on to voluntary groups, but if the Government were really serious about the issue, they would make a short statement of intent in the Queen's Speech, find a way of producing the cash, and be prepared to insist on something happening in the next 12 months. If they are prepared to invest much money into how to put tolls on motorways, but not to consider urgently the other problems and how to fund measures to solve them, we shall know that their priorities are badly skewed.

Those mums out there rely on the House of Commons to look after their interests. Those dads who are at risk when their children are ferried about the country, sometimes in substandard vehicles, need to know that the Government will do something about it. If they do not, if they do not follow some of the charter lines that have already been set out, we shall know that, as in so many things, the Government's commitment to change is simply a public relations exercise which has little genuine concern behind it.

10.37 am

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I congratulate the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on securing a debate on this important subject. It is a pleasure to respond to the points that she made. As of this morning, I am the longest serving Minister in the Department. I grant you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is a dubious distinction, but one of which I might as well be proud.

Much of what the hon. Lady said was from the heart and contained a great deal of common sense. I hope that she will find, in the next few minutes, that we agree about a great deal and that we share concerns about a great deal. I hope that I can expose some of our ambitions, either stated or implicit, in this area and some of the difficulties that we face in achieving, as quickly as she and any reasonable person would want, some of the objectives that she outlined. In most senses, this is not a political debate, but I hope that she will forgive me if I chide her on one aspect of her speech which I thought slightly devalued the otherwise important comments that she made.

It simply is not good enough for the hon. Lady to make the sweeping assertion—as she did in relation to the Transport Research Laboratory, the vehicle inspectorate, the traffic area offices and the operator licensing provisions —that our pursuit of greater efficiency, greater economy and better value for the taxpayers' money must necessarily be at the expense of safety. She knows that that is not true. She is too experienced not to be aware that tremendous economies can be achieved in the services that we operate on behalf of taxpayers, while the cornerstone of our improvements remains that safety standards will not be compromised.

The hon. Lady referred to the 38,264 inspections that the vehicle inspectorate carried out last year. I was not briefed on this specific point, because I had not seen it as central to minibus safety, but I recognise that it is germane to the argument. She knows that the statistics show not only that the vehicle inspectorate is doing a good job in identifying people who run inadequate vehicles but that

more tests are being carried out. We do not simply test at random. Inspectors target vehicles that are likely to be at fault.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): Hear, hear.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), who takes a keen interest in transport matters, confirms that inspectors target not recently registered, clearly up to date and modern vehicles but those that might be suspect and, to their credit, they are identifying faults on a proportion that is unacceptably large— I agree with the hon. Lady about that—and are taking action. We now have more action and less administration and bureaucracy in vehicle inspections.

I visited traffic area offices when preparing to take through the operator licensing provisions of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. I am satisfied that none of the Bill's provisions will lower the high standards of traffic area offices' work. We are reducing the administrative tail of such organisations. It is scandalous that whenever we propose to abolish clearly redundant, excessive and burdensome regulations or make any economies in the public service it is portrayed by Opposition Members as a lowering of safety standards.

The hon. Lady knows that that is not true. Like her, my children have been transported on minibuses. We all live in the same world: our children are all exposed to the same risks, and I do not want them to be more exposed to risk any more than she does. I am a motorist. I drive a car and am susceptible to risks from anyone coming towards me. It may be an oncoming motorist who kills me rather than a mistake of mine. I therefore approve of quality testing and safety testing.

What I do not approve of is the extraordinary assumption that we must accept whatever bureaucratic machinery we have and never alter it because to do so would be to betray safety standards or to imply a lowering of our concern over enforcement. The two are not compatible.

The same applies, if the hon. Lady does not mind me saying so, to the way in which police forces are reorganising traffic activities. I assure her that I have always found the commissioner constructive, helpful and concerned about traffic enforcement generally, and the service that the Metropolitan police provide is excellent.

I readily acknowledge that the hon. Lady knows better than me that more than 100,000 minibuses operate in private use and for hire or reward under the permit system or the public service vehicle operating licence. Many thousands of people and voluntary organisations involved with elderly or disabled people are heavily dependent on minibuses. We reckon that about 10 million passenger journeys a year are made by the voluntary sector, and minibuses are a real lifeline to elderly and disabled people and are extremely useful to young people. They are a safe form of transport.

TRL figures for 1987 showed that occupant casualty rates for minibus passengers per number of miles covered were about a third of those for car passengers. As the hon. Lady well knows, the safety of minibus travel compared with car travel has been confirmed by our statistics up to as late as 1993, the latest time for which they are available. But it would be quite wrong for us to say, and she was correct to infer this, that as a result everything is fine and we need not take more urgent action, because every road death is one too many. As she said, it does not matter whether the life is young or old or from one's own family or from outside it: road deaths are a tragedy and must be avoided wherever possible.

Against that background, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced on Tuesday a package of measures to enhance minibus and coach safety through the fitting of seat belts. We need no persuading of the advantages of fitting seat belts, and we want to ensure that they are widely fitted as soon as possible.

At the Luxembourg Transport Council in June, my right hon. Friend called on the Commission to make early progress on proposals for the compulsory fitting of two-point belts to all new minibuses and coaches. He urged it to set the shortest possible timetable. I believe that that is the right longer-term solution. Vehicle standards are, properly, single market measures. Under the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, it would be nonsense to apply different safety standards across a Community of 12, and soon to be 16, which would have a devastating effect on our export capacity. I am convinced that we must look to Europe for construction and use standards. That is the way to ensure that everyone is properly protected.

The hon. Lady raised some interesting issues—for example, whether the two-point belt or cross-over belt is the more appropriate and whether the implications for fitment and wearing in coaches with high-back seats of different types of belts have been properly considered. All those issues are important and, in so far as they relate to construction and use, discussion of them should be held within the Community.

Mrs. Dunwoody: How long, how long?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady says, from a sedentary position, "How long, how long?". That is a line from Shakespeare, but, at this time of the morning, I am afraid that my brain, like yours, I suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is sufficiently fuzzy not to be able to recall from whence. She asks a perfectly valid question: is not all this taking a great deal of time? It will take some time, because the process involves negotiation through the 12 nations of the Community. The hon. Lady is an experienced parliamentarian, especially in relation to some European aviation legislation. She knows exactly how long the timetable will be.

As the hon. Lady and many other people have high expectations of early action, as safety is concerned and as the transport of children is especially sensitive, we have said that we will seek the Commission's agreement for the Government to act ahead of the European Union, to ensure that all minibuses and coaches are fitted with belts when they are used specifically for the transport of children.

That is a fairly straightforward proposition. It requires to be expanded and refined and we are working on the details now, but I assure the hon. Lady that there will be the widest possible consultation on the precise measures, once we have the Commission's views. We shall be taking full account of the concerns of users and of the voluntary groups that own minibuses, which have made such a major contribution to mobility.

I wish that I could give the hon. Lady a firm timetable for that programme today. The hon. Lady knows, from her experience of government, that I cannot do so, but I can

[Mr. Norris]

assure her that it is a matter of the utmost urgency. Subject to the views of the Commission, we hope to go out to consultation this autumn.

We shall also be amending the regulations that permit three children to share a double seat, in cases where seat belts are fitted—the three-for-two rule, with which she is familiar. There is no point in having seat belts fitted if they are not worn. We want children and adults to wear them. Frankly, I know that we have the support of parents, schools, voluntary groups and all those concerned with children's safety when we say so.

Meanwhile, may I take this opportunity to stress one or two matters that perhaps deserve a wider audience. There is nothing to prevent manufacturers from fitting belts to new vehicles in response to customer demand. It is already happening with line-built minibuses, and in most cases there is nothing to stop retro-fitting of belts to existing vehicles. Regulations have been in place since 1987, setting a standard for the fitment of vehicles, and I urge manufacturers and operators to take advantage of them.

There is another condition, called market forces—something that the Labour party often derides. How can market forces work in this respect? I received a letter the other day from a parent, who complained that the local school had transported children in a minibus that did not have seat belts. I wrote back—as the constituency Member of Parliament, rather than a Transport Minister—and confirmed that the school was acting perfectly lawfully, but that if parents were not prepared to allow their children to be transported in a minibus without seat belts they should make that absolutely clear to the head teacher. I sent the head teacher a copy of the letter.

The school rightly took on board that important consideration and I am sure that when it hires minibuses again, the first question it will ask the owner of the minibus, or the person hiring it, is, "Does this minibus have seat belts?" I hope that all those people involved in the occasional hiring of minibuses will do that, so that retro-fitting becomes more rapid and more organisations demand it. When they do, the market will provide it.

In summary, Tuesday's announcement constituted a major step forward for road safety, initially for children and, as soon as possible thereafter, for the public at large.

I know that the hon. Lady's interest goes much further than construction standards. Perhaps it is worth spelling out some of the background on minibus operation. Vehicles that carry nine or more passengers for a payment are classed as PSV vehicles and are obviously subject to operator licensing. The purposes of the system are to keep up the standards of commercial bus and coach operations, impose entry requirements that must be satisfied before a licence is granted, and control operators' performance and compliance with road traffic law.

In 1977, under the then Labour Government, it was recognised that for many non-commercial concerns that system was totally inappropriate, but they would be caught by it if, for example, they collected money from a scout troop by any charge for the trip being undertaken. For that reason, legislation exempted from PSV licensing arrangements minibuses used by voluntary organisations. The provisions of the Minibus Act 1977 were updated in 1987 and extended the types of groups that might apply for permits. They may be issued to organisations concerned with education, religion, social welfare, recreation, or other activities of benefit to the community. It is worth pointing out that organisations that have not sought to obtain permits, but operate under those circumstances, are strongly advised to do so.

As the hon. Lady knows, the Secretary of State designated identifiable national voluntary organisations that can issue permits only to their own branches and affiliate organisations, such as the Scout Association. The traffic commissioner acts as an anchor point for the issue of permits to other eligible local organisations.

About 44,000 permits have been issued since 1987, and the organisations covered by the permit scheme are responsible bodies that—as I am sure the hon. Lady agrees—can be trusted to take proper care over driving standards, and safety and vehicle maintenance.

Permit buses must comply with the same construction and equipment standards as other small buses and must be tested annually for road worthiness from the end of their first year. They are also subject to spot checks at the roadside by vehicle inspectors, and to prohibitions if a vehicle is found to be unfit, or likely to become unfit, for service. Permits will be withdrawn if the Traffic Commissioner is not satisfied by the standard of vehicle maintenance.

In a special exercise in the eastern traffic area this year, vehicle examiners inspected a sample of permit holders, just to establish that permits were applicable for the type of operation; that the vehicles were being properly maintained; and that the permit holder was aware of responsibilities in the operation and driving of the permit vehicle. I can let the hon. Lady see some more of the detail of that exercise. I am pleased to say that the results, in relation to the operation of the permit system, were very satisfactory.

Driver hours is another subject on which there has been much discussion. At present, minibuses used in the United Kingdom for private purposes, such as by schools and voluntary groups, are not required to have a tachograph, or to comply with drivers' hours regulations. The argument is that the driving of the minibus is usually only a small part of what the driver does, and the time spent driving is usually short.

When driving is not the main activity and relatively short periods of driving are undertaken, restricting drivers' hours would not be sensible, or effective. Any limitation would need to try to cover working, as opposed to driving, time. That would be extraordinarily difficult and impossible to enforce, not to mention the fact that requiring tachographs to be fitted and used on minibuses would also be expensive and burdensome. By definition, it would restrict the valuable use of minibuses, without making their use safer.

The reality is something on which the hon. Lady expounded and on which I have the same difficulty as her. That is that it is virtually impossible to control what people do prior to driving a vehicle. The vital message that we have to get across is that one should not drive when one is tired and that one should take regular breaks if one is going to undertake a long journey. Please, will people consider using a second driver, where sustained periods of driving might occur, especially at the end of the day?

The hon. Lady mentioned the tragic incidents of which we have all been aware recently. It is not appropriate or right for me to expound on those in any detail, but she and I are both concerned about the sort of situation in which an

adult takes a group on a day out. The adult might get up early, drive a long way, work with the children all day —keeping stragglers in line, ensuring that they keep their money together, seeing them through the attractions, and giving them a meal in the evening—and then drive the coach again. One must wonder whether it is not appropriate to take a second adult along when one contemplates that burden, just to share the driving load. The hon. Lady is right—the key is to be sensible and to understand just how important it is not to be below par when one is going to drive many other people.

We fully share the hon. Lady's concern about minibus safety. As she knows, we are to improve the driver training regime and public consultation has recently been concluded on a number of issues arising from the second EC directive on driver licensing.

This is an important issue and the hon. Lady's enthusiasm for early action is understandable. I hope that I have demonstrated that the Department is equally committed to early improvement in standards and that the actions announced this week by my right hon. Friend will go a long way towards achieving that.

Space Industry

11 am

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): I start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), the immediate past Minister with responsibility for space, who has given sterling service to the country and the Government over several years. I remember canvassing for him in the hills of Derbyshire during the by-election at which he entered Parliament in 1986. I am sure that we all wish him well for the future.

I also welcome to the Dispatch Box the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), and congratulate him on his well-deserved appointment to the Front Bench. I hope that he will always remember that his first debate was on space and that that subject will always be at the top of his list of priorities. I hope that he will find my speech helpful, certainly in setting a new direction for space policy and maximising the United Kingdom's potential in that area. He will find that the space community throughout the world will welcome his appointment and be willing to assist him on every occasion. Perhaps one or two European aspects of my speech will strike a chord with him at this early stage in his ministerial career.

I am delighted to have secured this opportunity to raise the subject of the UK's position in the space industry, an issue that has not been properly debated in the House since 1988. It is also apposite as this week there have been widespread celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the moon landing, a remarkable feat for mankind. However, several matters need to be examined urgently in relation to UK space policy, not least because in September 1995 the European Space Agency Ministers' conference will look at the long-term programme, which will obviously be important for European space programmes for the next couple of decades.

The European Space Agency is now producing positioning papers and it is important that the UK participates not only in the ministerial but in the preparatory work. Without the assurance of a modern national space programme, the UK will at best be able only to react to other proposals. Until now we have depended heavily on ESA, and if we are to ensure that the ministerial meeting approves programmes that are useful to the UK, we need to be active in defining what we want to achieve from space activities.

The policies that we laid down in 1988 and the funding level are not producing the results that we intended, and there is evidence that they could even be damaging the chances of our space industry becoming competitive in a very competitive market. It is also urgent because we now have to take into account important new players in the European space scene, particularly the European Commission which has a potentially significant new role both as a user of space systems—earth observation is just one example—and, complementary to ESA, to help European industry benefit from large new marketing opportunities in, for example, navigation.

ESA was set up some 30 years ago to create a European space industry and to ensure that Europe could gain a foothold in an area that was then dominated by the space war between the USA and the USSR. At that time my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade represented

[Mrs. Cheryl Gillan]

the UK as a junior Minister and showed his great ability in conducting the negotiations that established ESA. It would now be most helpful if the President could again inspire the UK to a leadership role in reconstructing ESA to meet the needs of Europe for the next 20 or 30 years.

Until the mid-1980s, ESA was a great success. It helped to establish the European communications satellite industry, notably in the UK, which led to the creation of Inmarsat and Eutelsat, both of which were originally based on ESA satellites. It also provided the basic industrial infrastructure leading to the successful military communications satellites of which the latest Skynet 4 version has been bought by NATO in preference to US military satellites.

ESA also led in the production of meteorological satellites which are the basis of Eumetsat and the daily pictures on TV weather reports. Those technologies have led to the new generation of earth observation satellites, especially ERS 1 with its all-weather observation capabilities for which the radar was developed in the United Kingdom. ESA also has highly regarded international scientific programmes for astronomy and solar system science in which the United Kingdom's scientific community and our industries play an important role. For example, the space probe Giotto was built in the UK.

I am sad to say that the UK took only a small part in the final ESA success, the Ariane launcher. I say "sad" because Ariane is now winning over half the commercial launches that are put out to global competition. That success is bringing considerable benefit to the industries in those countries that decided to take a share. Since we use Ariane launchers for Skynet and pay a share of the cost of the launches that are required by ESA, we are contributing to work which largely goes to benefit space industries in countries other than our own.

However, I must not fail to acknowledge our contribution to the manufacture of the very accurate guidance system for Ariane and also the SPELDA system that separates the satellites as they are released into space. Those are impressive British accomplishments. During the 1980s, ESA decided to pursue a policy of seeking full autonomy in space for Europe and particularly for man in space, an aspect on which we have relied on US co-operation. The programme that was decided upon included continuing co-operation with the United States through the newly proposed space station in which Japan and Canada were also to be partners. But autonomy in putting man in space was to be achieved through an ambitious space plane—Hermes. Furthermore, this was to be achieved by the year 2000.

That ambitious programme was approved at the ESA ministerial meeting in The Hague in 1987, notwithstanding the fact that it required a doubling of the ESA annual budget. The UK refused to join on the ground that it was an expensive endeavour to achieve what the USA and the USSR had achieved 20 years earlier. In the aftermath of the demise of the USSR and one or two dramatic failures in the NASA programme, especially the failure of Challenger, money for space activities was put under more political scrutiny both in the United States and in the European countries.

NASA has had difficulties in funding the international space station, even with the new involvement of Russia. ESA Ministers found the escalating costs of ESA and especially Hermes unacceptable. Consequently, ESA has abandoned Hermes and is seeking a programme within, at best, level funding which Ministers might approve next year.

I have outlined that to show that ESA has served Europe well, but that it now appears to have lost its way in the prevailing political circumstances. Since we have funded most of our space activities through ESA, the uncertainties surrounding the programme and its direction is damaging to us and to our industries. That is why I am encouraging my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and our new Minister to renew interest in ESA and to help to seek a new role that will suit our purposes as well as those of the rest of Europe.

We need strong political leadership, because our refusal to support the man in space programme and the subsequent decisions to leave our funding at the existing level, has left us outside the main stream of ESA thinking. It is ironic that being proved right about Hermes has not endeared us to those who have tried and failed.

Due to our perceived attitude to space, the United Kingdom has lost much of its influence, not only in ESA, but in all parts of the world. That does not affect only the British national space centre; the effect inevitably rubs off on British industry, too. More to the point, the fact that we have placed a ceiling on expenditure, which is committed for the next few years, means that we cannot join new programmes, however meretricious, except, possibly, at a derisory level. That is bound to be damaging to our industries and is hardly likely to leave us in an influential position of forming new ESA policies, if we cannot participate.

I shall mention just three cases in point. We cannot join the new ESA communications technology programme, even though our industries are prepared to contribute 50 per cent. of the funding themselves—unique in Europe. We are offering a very small contribution to the ESA share of the second generation meteorological satellite, which will damage our industries' chance of taking part in the operational programme, for which satellites will be needed for the next 20 years.

ESA is starting to examine the next century's generation of launchers, in the Festive programme, in which our ideas on the horizontal take-off and landing launcher or alternative systems have been world leaders. A share in that would be of major benefit to our capabilities in the areas of advanced materials, avionics, software and to all markets in which we presently have some eminence. If we cannot participate in all those programmes, we shall severely damage our competitiveness and, perhaps, the existence of the many capabilities which our ESA contributions have helped us to create over the years.

The situation is made worse by the fact that the modest national programme, which the Department of Trade and Industry has always funded to help our industries to achieve success in the applications market, is being seriously eroded over the next few years. The space industry is no longer what we instinctively think—or rather thought—it to be. Its constituency has widened, so that many companies, such as those in the service industry, now use space as one component in their portfolio of activities.

They will not be able to operate successfully unless there is some judicious, planned and sustained Government direction and investment.

It is often said that industry is primarily responsible for making itself competitive. I know that our own industry accepts that challenge, but in partnership with Government, as I have outlined. This week, we have seen the merger of our largest companies, Matra Marconi and British Aerospace Space Systems, bringing together their complementary capabilities, which will put the single company in a much better position to compete effectively.

I welcome that change, but I recognise that we have smaller companies with space capabilities, such as those represented by ASTOS, based in my constituency. Those companies also need to understand the sense of purpose in Government policy if they are to thrive. It is, after all, the smaller companies that are likely to achieve the growth in jobs which we all want to see as one of the products of our space policy. A rethink of space policy on what we want to achieve and how we want to achieve it is necessary and necessary now. The policies of 1988 may have been right then, but they do not seem to be right now.

I mentioned earlier the entry of new players on the space scene. When I visited Brussels last week, with colleagues from the parliamentary space committee, we were delighted to hear how the Commission has come to recognise that there are a number of things which it can do to help European industry to achieve benefit from space activities. The Commission is already the biggest single user of satellite earth observation data.

In recent years, DG VI, the agricultural directorate, has come to use those data for assessing crop yields, and I especially look forward to it using the data to help combat common agricultural policy fraud. That alone could ultimately represent major financial savings to the European Union on the escalating costs of detecting fraud. Several directorates use data for dealing with environmental problems in the European Union and, in developing countries, for example, for mapping and exploration of natural resources.

The Commission is also conducting with ESA an important study on how we can handle and distribute earth observation data in Europe to benefit those who can use the information. By the end of the century, there will be enormous quantities of data pouring down from earth observation satellites which are already planned. We need to agree how we can best handle that data in Europe, but eventually, we shall need co-operation on a global scale very much as was envisaged at the environment conference in Rio.

The Commission is also making progress in reaching agreement in Europe on satellite navigation. In that area, there are massive opportunities for our industries; airlines, ships, cars, and lorries. Europe has a strong involvement at present in satellite navigation systems and we need to ensure that we at least maintain that position and that we do not lose out to the United States or Japan in the future.

There are other areas requiring Commission involvement: negotiating for a level playing field for our satellite industries and for the Ariane launcher; regulation of satellite communication in Europe; and negotiating, especially with the USA, on future mobile systems. Those would be useful negotiations which require action at a European level.

I hope that I have given the House the flavour of my argument—we have an urgent need to review space policy. We have important interests to protect and some exciting new fields to explore and exploit. Our level of funding for national programmes and our contributions to ESA should not be related to some historical level of funding. At the international level, and especially in ESA, we need to show how our policies of favouring space applications, with which many countries have come to share, can bring benefit through the adoption of market-led policies.

At the same time, we need to support our industries where they face competition, not least from United States companies, which have received support from their own Government. In due course, we may be able to persuade other Governments to reduce their support, but I am afraid that we are not there by a long way yet.

Space is no longer the sole province of the space enthusiast, although I hope that those enthusiasts will continue to point the way not least for our children, for whom space is a great incentive to study science and technology. I have tried to indicate some of the economic and social benefits which space activities may bring to earth. With the fresh thinking in other countries, it is the right moment for us to review our policies and re-engage in international planning for space activities, which can achieve our objectives. It would be a great pity if the 25th anniversary of the Apollo landing also heralded the abandonment of space by the UK because of its apathy towards policy and future planning and expenditure.

In September, ESA will be present at the Farnborough air show for the first time in 15 years. I know that we welcome it to that venture. The UK will also host the first European parliamentarians conference on space. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will be able to send the right messages to ESA, to our industrialists and especially to that conference, so that we can again lead Europe on the formation of space policy as we did 30 years ago.

11.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Ian Taylor): It is a particular pleasure to reply to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) is a great expert in these matters; she has pursued the subject of space with great expertise and knowledge since arriving in the House. I admit to the House that it is a subject with which I am somewhat less familiar.

Certainly, I did not expect to have the honour of replying to my hon. Friend until a short time before she got to her feet. However, that is one of the excitements of assuming a ministerial office and learning about the portfolios that one is honoured to have at one's disposal.

My hon. Friend made a timely contribution, because there is no doubt that space is a subject of enormous interest to British industry, which she stressed, and, of course, for reasons which any cursory glance at the television would show, it is of great interest to the British public and to the public around the world.

The extraordinary events that we are seeing on our television screens are the result of much hard work in the past by industry. Therefore, the timing of the debate is particularly appropriate. It has been a long time since the previous debate on space in the House, which I am told took place in 1988. I am delighted to have this opportunity to reply to my hon. Friend.

As my hon. Friend said, yesterday we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the first manned landing on the moon.

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

The Shoemaker-Levy comet, as it disintegrated and descended into Jupiter, has had the most extraordinary effect in galvanising public opinion behind what can be achieved by the technology that is available to us in monitoring such events.

We should draw attention to the role that the Hubble space telescope has played in monitoring the Shoemaker-Levy comet and to the remarkable corrective action that was taken last year on the telescope to enable us now to have a wealth of new information for analysis by the scientific and astronomical community worldwide. We in Britain can take justifiable pride in the contribution that we have made to the telescope. It reminds us of the high regard in which our space science is held worldwide, which my hon. Friend underlined. We have an industry of which we can be proud.

We have also played our part in the European Space Agency's Ulysses mission, which has been able to observe the event from space. The British public should appreciate the role that we have played in ensuring that these dramatic events can be seen.

There are other examples, of course. In 1985, United Kingdom industry led the development of the Giotto mission to intercept Halley's comet. That proved to be an outstanding success. It was also United Kingdom industry which primed all ESA's satellite telecommunications missions which have flown so far.

Our major contribution to the Earth remote sensing satellites has provided—it will continue to do so—a wealth of data about the Earth and the development of its environment.

An important feature of these achievements is that they are possible through our collaboration with other nations in pursuing space activities. It is clear that no nation—not even a super-power—can afford the cost of major space missions in today's economic climate. Indeed, it may not be possible for a nation to try to meet the cost, given the exchange of know-how that can take place with other countries.

That was not always the case. America and Russia separately pioneered space programmes, for example. As my hon. Friend remarked, co-operation is now the order of the day. In that sense, the space race between nations is over and the old rivalry has been merged into co-operative ventures. We have only to have regard to the efforts to include Russian participation in the international space station to perceive how much progress has already been made in that context.

We are talking about new opportunities, but they will bring problems of adjustment. We are working closely with our partners in ESA in adapting the agency's operations to the new situation.

The other major change since the epic first steps on the moon has been the emergence of an identifiable commercial requirement for space telecommunications, broadcasting, navigation and business services. My hon. Friend mentioned all those items. Governments are no longer the only players in space, so our attention has turned to industry's need to be competitive in world space markets.

That is an important part of the responsibilities of the Department of Trade and Industry. My former responsibilities as parliamentary private secretary to the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave me a great insight into the wide range of input that comes from the science community. The Government's science budget is operated through research councils and is dealt with by the Cabinet Office.

The House will be aware that the Government's White Paper on competitiveness was a result of extensive consultation with industry, taking account of experience in identifying the key factors that determine success for world-class companies in the international market. Particular attention must be paid by the Government to creating a stable macro-economic environment and to fair and open markets. At the same time, our firms should be committed to innovation, quality and better management practice, for example. Space can be no exception to the need for partnership between industry and Government. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend underline that.

The House will wish to be told that the British National Space Centre is this morning consulting a broad cross-section of United Kingdom space companies on the full range of issues raised in the White Paper, including further development of an export strategy which involves our embassies, export promoters, trade specialists and, of course, industrial managers and market specialists.

My hon. Friend referred to telecommunications. Over the past year, the BNSC has worked closely with companies and trade associations to agree a strategy for that sector of the space industry, taking account of business opportunities, perceived barriers to markets and realistic levels of resource.

Companies in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe meet various forms of tariff and non-tariff barriers in international markets. The Government are already heavily engaged in reducing those barriers. We work closely with the European Commission on conditions of trade.

The Government set out their civil space policy in a statement to the House in 1988, to which we have firmly adhered. Its key elements have been, and continue to be, to develop and introduce work space technologies. That is carried out principally by selective and cost-effective use of ESA programmes. Additionally, our national programme is aimed at achieving further exploitation of our investment in ESA, alongside necessary investment by industry.

The first priority objective of our policy has been, the development of Earth observation for environmental and long-term purposes. Again, my hon. Friend mentioned that. The second objective is to help industry to take advantage of past investment to make a commercial success of satellite communications and, where appropriate, to foster development of specialised telecommunications technologies for niche markets. The third objective is the maintenance of a sound space science base. I can assure my hon. Friend that our membership of ESA remains an important part of our space policy.

The space agency has undoubtedly been a source of many successful missions and developments in space technologies. The agency, with the United Kingdom as the lead participant, laid the foundations for today's thriving satellite telecoms sector. With the United Kingdom as a major proponent, the agency is at the forefront of Earth observation. Our contribution to the ESA science programme has been and still is extremely successful. The UK is playing a leading role in ESA's major contribution

to our understanding of the Earth's environment through the successful Earth remote sensing satellite and its future missions.

Our main driving force is to identify and develop the applications of Earth observation data that are available from ESA and other sources. We are working on potential commercial applications in agriculture, fisheries and transport, ensuring that UK companies are in a good position to exploit market opportunities. In addition, the BNSC is working with the EU, which is a potentially large user of environmental information. I was glad that my hon. Friend discussed co-operation between the various directors-general of the European Commission. It is an extremely important matter. I am delighted that the Commission is becoming effective in attempting to gain the most out of the ESA programme.

With regard to telecommunications, it is useful to look beyond ESA and to consider sources of investment and the Government's role. Over many years, we have led, or have been a major subcontractor, for a series of very successful telecommunications or communications satellites. As the perception of a real market for space telecommunications has matured, Governments have created European and international satellite operating companies.

European manufacturers, in a strong position from success in ESA programmes, have had considerable success in supplying those operators. As they are exposed to international competition for their service, those operators expect European industry to be competitive with United States suppliers.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. I simply wanted to congratulate him, as an old friend, on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box. It gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to do that.

Mr. Taylor: That intervention has not thrown me, although I am delighted by my right hon. Friend's comments. I am grateful to him, and I hope that all his subsequent interventions on me at the Dispatch Box will be as kind and generous.

As I was saying, operators in the European industry must be competitive with United States suppliers. As markets for telecommunications, weather forecasting, broadcasting and so on have become more mature, opportunities have become available outside Europe.

Although there have been successes, European companies have faced fierce competition from American contractors who benefit from their large civil and defence home markets. Reductions in American defence expenditure have heightened that competition.

The United Kingdom and European industry acknowledges the need continually to improve competitiveness, particularly on time and price, to win a more significant slice of opportunities in Japan, China, Korea and elsewhere. The Department of Trade and Industry is very much behind those efforts.

Increased Government expenditure on research and development would have little direct effect. In these circumstances, we must be driven by British industry. Action by Government to create fair open markets, and by European industry to increase competitiveness, can have a decisive influence.

However, ESA programmes continue to provide real opportunities to develop scientific instruments, technology, components and applications relevant to telecommunications and European markets. We contribute to a number of aimed development programmes which are consistent with our overall policy.

Some emerging markets require a more global and more rapid response than ESA has traditionally provided. The market in satellite navigation is an example of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham referred to that point and, in so doing, revealed her considerable knowledge of that sector.

The British National Space Centre is currently talking with ESA, Eurocontrol and the Department of Trade and Industry about the next generation of air traffic navigation systems in order to ensure European success in that market.

Mrs. Gillan: Does my hon. Friend agree that an important dimension to those discussions should include the European Commission, which can provide a larger overview of the requirements of the whole of the European Union, including the new members that we expect to join shortly?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Quite often in this country, we tend to want to downplay the Commission. However, when the Commission acts in such areas, it acts in Britain's interests to gain the maximum advantage from the high technology opportunities available and because, as I said earlier, it is essential that we have co-operation between countries and industries on a cross-national basis in this area.

No one country is capable of making a proper contribution. In such circumstances, it makes sense for the Commission to play a leading role. I have learnt a great deal from my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham this morning about the way in which directorates-general are co-operating. Having assumed my ministerial responsibilities, it is clear that I will be greatly involved in those discussions.

New Ministers are always amused when they discover what is planned for them, in respect of which they have had no say. However, I understand that there will be discussions in the European Union in which I will take part. Those discussions will enable me to understand the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham has made and to see just how effective co-operation between the directorates-general is.

As my hon. Friend pointed out, there are practical civil applications, across the board, from the knowledge that we are gaining from many of our space activities. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing the attention of the House to those points.

Mrs. Gillan: Perhaps I can hearten my hon. Friend by informing him that, in my discussions last week with Commission representatives, they were not backward in coming forward in praising the attitude, stance and capabilities of our United Kingdom representatives who, from time to time, find themselves in discussions across the directorates-general in respect of the subject that we are discussing today. I pass on to my hon. Friend the fact that the officials and representatives who are exposed to those directorates-general in the Commission are already very user-friendly towards the United Kingdom delegation.

Mr. Taylor: That is very valuable news, and I look forward to co-operating with my hon. Friend as I learn about the various activities.

[Mr. Taylor]

My hon. Friend made an important point. It is not only officials who must be abreast of the developments; Members of Parliament must also be abreast of them. My hon. Friend referred to the recent visit of the parliamentary committee. There is also to be a conference of parliamentarians next year in this country. That is quite right and proper. We should take a lead. The parliamentary space committee, with which I had some dealings in my former existence in the Office of Public Service and Science, is impressive in the way in which it initiates discussions and takes a lead in its links with industry and the European Union.

I am delighted about the conference, and look forward to learning more about the timetable and planning and what we in the DTI can do to assist. It is important for us to be prodded by colleagues in the House who have a particularly specialist interest. As a Minister, I look forward to being prodded by my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham in the months to come.

Co-operation between the Government and industry is very important. As I said, the BNSC is currently talking to ESA, Eurocontrol and the DTI about the next generation of air traffic navigation systems under the general heading of satellite navigation. A company in my constituency has been involved in those discussions.

It is important to try to get industry to come forward with research and development money and to enable the United Kingdom contribution to ESA to be the broadest possible across Government and industry. I am satisfied that the present provision in the national programme covers the key essentials, particularly in relation to our priority objectives in Earth observation.

Our emphasis is, and will be, on value for money both in the conduct of ESA's operations and in encouraging the most cost-effective approach to the provision of all space and space-related services.

My hon. Friend will know that, sometimes, with exciting issues such as space, which is easily capable of pulling the imagination with it, with the phenomenal things that we now see on television, there is sometimes a feeling that value for money and efficiency should not be part of the equation and that money should be spent because it is a good thing. I know that my hon. Friend does not share that view, and, as a Minister, I certainly do not share that view.

If something is as good as the whole technology which has driven forward the space programme, it is important for the Government to encourage industry to get the best value for money out of its activities and to concentrate on the matters that it can do best. In areas where resources in any one industry or country are inadequate, we must consider important prospects for the co-operation to which we have made reference.

There is to be a ministerial conference in late 1995. We are considering the future direction of the agency's programme. That conference is already an important part of the calendar. There will be many preparatory meetings on a bilateral and European basis, and the agenda will be of enormous importance. If I may be so bold in my first appearance at the Dispatch Box, I invite the parliamentary space committee to put forward ideas well in advance. Perhaps the ministerial conference and the parliamentarians' conference, which my hon. Friend has informed the House about, could make sure that our agendas have rapprochement so that we do not end up trying to second-guess each other on the these matters.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my hon. Friend for his generous invitation to the parliamentary space committee. I am sure that my fellow officers of the committee will respond to it in due course. I am extremely heartened already to know that my hon. Friend is listening to, and is willing to take on board, fresh ideas, and expects, particularly in the run-up to September 1995, to participate in the discussions during the lead-in period to the EC ministerial conference.

Mr. Taylor: We will be in touch with my hon. Friend and the other officers of the parliamentary space committee to work out how we can best gain advantage from those two conferences.

I agree with my hon. Friend that there have been many significant changes to the political, defence and economic environment in recent years, although those changes have brought our partners in ESA closer to our position—that is, putting space to work—rather than creating a diversity of view. As events have turned out, our decision not to take part in a European manned space programme was sensible, although, of course, it might have been exciting. The main planks of our space policy remain valid, and, indeed, other ESA partners are realigning their policies more closely with United Kingdom objectives.

My hon. Friend mentioned several changes that are now taking place. I had also noticed the British Aerospace deal with Matra Marconi. I might even visit the company to see what progress is being made. I have already mentioned that I have Logica Space and Defence in my constituency, and it will be interesting to be able to visit that company as the Minister, as opposed to just an interested Back-Bencher. Such excitement lies in wait for me in the programme that I am now honoured to be able to follow from the Front Bench.

Overall, my industrial and business background tells me that nothing will be successful in this very exciting sector unless it is firmly based on a cost-effective programme. We must not try to do things that we cannot follow through. We have constraints on our budgets. My hon. Friend mentioned that the Department of Trade and Industry budget is not exactly expanding, but it is only part of a much broader Government contribution to the British National Space Centre, and other Departments are co-operating.

My hon. Friend mentioned the European Space Agency's telecommunications technology programme. The Government are contributing to some parts of the technology framework known as the ARTES. We are very open to influence by industry, perhaps to switch between the various subjects. At the moment, there are commitments to elements of ARTES 1 and 4, and we propose to join ARTES 9, but we will listen closely to representations. Overall, the co-operation between British industry and the Government is working well. Certainly, we are very keen indeed to see a proper and effective European Space Agency working in this very exciting sector.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts and Measures:

Appropriation Act 1994
Land Drainage Act 1994
Trade Marks Act 1994
Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1994
Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Pollution) Act 1994
Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994
Education Act 1994
Firearms (Amendment) Act 1994
Lerwick Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1994
Croydon Tramlink Act 1994
London Local Authorities Act 1994
London Docklands Development Corporation Act 1994
Hill Samuel Bank and United Dominions Trust Act 1994
Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Act 1994
Care of Cathedrals (Supplementary Provisions) Measure 1994
Church of England (Legal Aid) Measure 1994

Antarctic Treaty

11.46 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I welcome the Minister to his first outing on this brief. What finer start could there be to a ministerial career in the Foreign Office than to deal with the problems of Antarctica? I hope that it means that there is now a Minister for the Antarctic to give the topic the seriousness it deserves.

This is not the first time that I have raised matters concerning Antarctica, and I suspect that it will not be the last. I hope that, with his breakfast briefing this morning, the Minister read carefully my Adjournment debate in 1991 and those of other hon. Members on this matter. It is a matter to which several hon. Members keep returning for several reasons, mainly because we passionately want the Antarctic to be preserved as a zone of peace, as a place that is permanently protected environment, and also as a place that is free from mineral exploration and exploitation. The history of this subject is one of see-saws in many respects.

That continent has been appallingly exploited in the past, particularly for its mammal population. Apart from memories of Antarctic whaling, it has also been a place of great inspiration and great scientific discovery. The hole in the ozone layer was discovered through the work of the British Antarctic survey in Antarctica. The levels of lead pollution in our atmosphere were discovered by taking core samples of ice, and we were also able to measure increases in the carbon dioxide pollution of our atmosphere and global warming.

Many of us strongly opposed the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989. It was with great pleasure that we saw the environmental protection protocol agreed in Madrid in 1991. It was an enormous step forward. That protocol brought forward the concept of comprehensive environmental protection and a number of principles surrounding it. One was that the continent should be a place of environmental protection, including the protection of biological intrinsic wilderness and aesthetic and scientific values, and that there should be controls on and planning of all activities there, be they scientific activities, tourist activities or expeditions of various sorts.

Arguments about mineral activities have gone on for a long time. The protocol banned all mineral exploration and exploitation for 50 years. Consideration may be given after 25 years to what might happen in the future, but perhaps it is now time to think ahead and to try to create the concept for a permanent wilderness park rather than the idea that, at some point, there might be the possibility of exploration there.

The technology does not exist for mineral exploration or exploitation of the area, but clearly it could exist in time. The Madrid protocol went forward to establish the principles of the Antarctic Act which passed through the House not long ago. From that, we then looked forward to the passage of similar Acts of Parliament from the other 26 treaty countries. It is important for those Parliaments also to agree, because unless there is agreement by at least the original signatories to the 1959 treaty, the future of the Antarctic is in doubt.

There are flaws within the treaty system, and also within the Act, in that not every country in the world has signed the treaty. A country which was not a signatory to the treaty and the protocol and had not agreed to any of the environmental protection measures could, theoretically,

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

exploit the Antarctic. We hope that that will not be the case and that others will in time come forward and support the principles behind it.

We must look ahead to what we will do in that context, because the need to settle disputes is important. The continent is overridden with a series of often conflicting territorial claims from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile and a number of others. Nations have bases in Antarctica for scientific research, and the possibility of disputes surrounding either the claims or the activities of those bases is considerable.

The importance of moving quickly on that matter cannot be over-emphasised. In the discussions that took place about the Madrid protocol, there was agreement on environmental impact assessments of any activity going on there. There was also agreement on the conservation of fauna and flora, including, for example, the removal of all dogs from the Antarctic from April 1994. I understand that the dogs have all been removed, with the huskies at the British base going to Canada.

It is important that there is an emphasis on waste disposal and management. Greenpeace expeditions to the Antarctic and its examination of British, American, French, Russian and other bases showed that the standards of waste management varied greatly. As it is an area of low precipitation, and it is obviously a cold part of the world, biodegradation is very slow. Pollution is very much to the fore.

The protocols on waste disposal and management are important, as is the protocol on marine pollution. Sewage, oil or garbage seeping into the sea will not self-destruct quickly, and damage can be caused by that. There is also the question of protected areas within Antarctica, including the whale sanctuary which is very popular and is wholly to be welcomed.

We must now look at the future of the Madrid protocol and where we go from here. If the protocol is to mean anything—all the words in it were, in many senses, in response to pressure from environmental groups around the world which, with popular support, had a vision that the continent could be preserved as a zone of peace and a protected zone—something must be done.

It is not enough to pass the Act through the House. The Minister will be aware from reading the concluding debate on Report and Third Reading of the Antarctic Bill that a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House expressed concern that the passage of the Act was not enough, and that the date in which it came into operation internationally was crucial.

Within the treaty is the idea of the establishment of a treaty secretariat, and that is very important. At the moment, each time there is a consultative meeting, the host nation becomes the organiser of the next meeting. There is no permanent secretariat, but a rotating secretariat which is handed from Government to Government. That is not a particularly satisfactory way of going on. There are different standards of administration and different amounts of resources are placed in the hands of the secretariat. There is not an on-going repository of information or advice on Antarctica which can be readily accessed by different groups around the world.

The 28th Antarctic treaty consultative meeting was held in Kyoto in April, and it established the transitional environment working group as an interim step towards the eventual committee of environmental protection which is required in the protocol. The next host nation, I understand, will be Korea, which is undertaking the work of preparing for that next meeting.

There is no permanent secretariat, but around the world there is a wealth of information and knowledge concerning Antarctica—much of it good, much benign. But there are also people around the world who have a less benign attitude towards Antarctica. They may see the possibilities of mineral exploration or exploitation in the future and there are those who may want to undertake tourist visits to Antarctica. The protocol and treaty specifically include the possibility of tourist visits and methods of tourism within Antarctica, but it is very important that those are controlled.

Visits to Antarctica by bases and the methods of administration of the bases which share information and standards concerning waste disposal and other equally important issues must be dealt with. We then have to look at who will permanently host the secretariat in the future, and it is important that we recognise what has happened up to now. There has been a changed attitude and atmosphere towards Antarctica, and people all around the world understand and accept it as a zone of peace and of scientific research. There must be an agreement on the administration of policies and a repository for information and advice.

I understand that the commanders in a number of the bases in Antarctica which belong to different countries have still not received copies of the protocol, and do not know what is in it. I am not saying that specifically about British bases, but other countries' bases certainly do not have it.

We must look at a location for the secretariat. There are five gateway nations to Antarctica—Chile, Argentina, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. They have enormous interests in Antarctica, as do a number of other countries, including the United States, Britain, Russia, Japan, Germany and others which have had bases there or which will have bases in the future.

I should be interested to hear the Minister's reply and his analysis of British strategy towards the southern oceans, because there has been a welcome change in attitude concerning Antarctica. However, there has also been the declaration of a zone of economic activity around South Georgia. How does that square with the attitude towards Antarctica as a zone of peace, rather than of exploration? I should be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about that.

I would also like to know what the attitude of the Minister is towards the siting of the secretariat, because it is essential that that functions for the effective application of the environmental protocol. I understand that Britain is blocking the offer by Argentina to host the secretariat in Buenos Aires. Argentina is a gateway nation, has had a base in Antarctica for a very long time and has undertaken scientific research there. The credibility of the British involvement in Antarctica could be seriously damaged if the blocking tactic continues.

Surely it is time to recognise that if agreement can be reached among the treaty nations—which apparently it can—on siting the secretariat in Argentina, that is where it should go. All the progress that has been made on environmental protection could be held up by the intransigence of Britain, which says that it does not want

the secretariat in Argentina. I assume that that is because of the disputes over the Falklands, but it works in the opposite direction as well. Argentina clearly disagrees with Britain about the Falklands. We heard in a debate on Latin America last night that there is now a great deal of understanding and discussion between the British and Argentine Governments. We heard that from the lips of the Minister at 2.30 this morning.

To understand the importance of siting the secretariat, we have to recognise that, if there is no co-ordinating body, much of what has been achieved, including environmental protection measures as well as the guidelines on tourist activity, which are very important, will be put at risk.

If we wanted to keep the Antarctic absolutely pure, the ideal solution would be to stop anyone other than authorised scientists and those working research stations going there. It would be difficult to do that. It is probably well nigh impossible to prevent tourist visits to Antarctica. People will want to go there. Indeed, many of us would welcome the opportunity to visit such a pristine and beautiful place.

If there are to be tourists, their activities must be controlled and we must have an absolute guarantee from tour operators about flights and the like, about how tourists will behave, that their rubbish will be taken home with them, that if they go by sea, suitable vessels which will be unlikely to founder on ice or rock will be used and that some form of rescue will be available.

The horrifying crash of the Air New Zealand aeroplane is all too recent in memory. We must recognise the problems of getting people back from Antarctica if a disaster happens. Operations would have to be of high quality and run by extremely experienced people. That means that guidelines on tourist activities must be drawn up. Potential tour operators and tourists will have to understand what they can and cannot do.

Tourists may also take part in land-based tourism. Bases might be opened for guests to stay for a few days, weeks or whatever to experience what life is like in the Antarctic. Unless there is agreement on the siting of the secretariat, the administration of the tourist protocol and the arguments surrounding tourism will be difficult to resolve. I look forward to the Minister saying that Britain is prepared to agree to the siting and establishment of the secretariat with all speed. That would be a signal to countries that have not yet succeeded in ratifying the treaty. I understand that several are still in the process of ratification and that by this time next year more than half the treaty nations should have achieved ratification through their national Parliaments. The faster we move, the more rapidly we can protect the Antarctic.

The Minister will undoubtedly tell me that there are lots of problems surrounding the siting of the secretariat and that other places should be considered. If a treaty system is established which requires a secretariat, it has to go somewhere. It happens for every treaty. When the United Nations was established, there was enormous discussion about where the permanent home should be. Eventually, for better or worse, for good or ill, it was agreed that it should go to New York, and in New York it has been ever since. Some people might not like it, but it has gone there.

Other secretariats have gone to other places. It must be said that, mainly, international secretariats of organisations have been sited in Europe or North America. It is important to recognise that the Antarctic treaty secretariat does not have to be sited in an English-speaking country. It could be one of the South American countries. It would seem that Argentina has a strong claim to house the secretariat, and I hope that the Minister will confirm that that is a possibility.

The criteria for housing the secretariat have to be neutrality, commitment, research programme and capability. While there are obviously judgments to be made on those matters, it seems that a country that is one of the nearest—there might be discussion as to whether Chile or Argentina is absolutely the nearest to Antarctica—has a claim. In view of Argentina's attitude to Antarctica and support for the treaty process, it seems to fulfil all the qualifications and to be capable of housing the secretariat. It would be welcome and helpful to site it in Argentina.

I shall conclude, to give the Minister sufficient time to reply. Perhaps he will be good enough to give way if I seek to intervene to clarify some points.

We should recognise how far we have come on Antarctica. If it had not been for the work of environmental groups, particularly Greenpeace International, including the surveys of the bases, the campaigning work throughout the world to protect the whales and mammal species in Antarctica and the campaign to include the sea bed in the treaty—I hope that it will be included at a later date when unfinished business has been completed—we would not have come so far. Greenpeace International in particular is to be congratulated on the work it has done. I hope that it will be able to continue.

The inclusion of the idea of a whale sanctuary around the Antarctic is wholly welcome. It recognises the danger to mammals in the sea and the horrific stories that have passed into legend about how the whales have been treated. They are supremely intelligent beings capable of communicating and travelling over many thousands of miles. They are enormous creatures. They have been hunted to near extinction in Antarctica. We hope that those days are behind us, but the problem is that the whale sanctuary has to be policed. We need a policing system to ensure that countries do not try to break into the sanctuary and illegally take whales.

In the past, many countries have taken whales. They include Japan, with its so-called scientific whaling. The Soviet Union lied about the number of whales it caught in the region. The whale sanctuary will also promote an understanding of the need for the overall protection of the whale species. Whales migrate vast distances. Perhaps while the Minister is about it he will make it clear that the British Government deplore the Norwegian attitude to whaling and Norway's apparent determination to continue the brutality of killing whales in the northern hemisphere. I hope that we can move to total protection of the whale species throughout the world. That would be very welcome indeed.

We have come an awfully long way on the issue of Antarctica. Some of us have spent a lot of time on it. We shall not give up merely because we do not yet have a siting for the secretariat. We want to see it sited and the treaty brought into operation. We want the continent to be protected. Above all, it would surely be a message to everyone in the world that, if we can protect that continent and learn so much from its natural history, we can change attitudes to protecting our natural world, in which we need to survive.

12.7 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on obtaining the Adjournment debate today. He is right. He impinged on my breakfast reading this morning. Listening to his speech I almost thought I was back as Minister for science.

I welcome this opportunity to debate further the matter of Antarctica. For a number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Islington, North, the issue is fresh in the mind of the House. The Antarctic Bill successfully passed all its stages on 16 June and received Royal Assent only two weeks ago, on 15 July. It was an important milestone in the United Kingdom's commitment to the Antarctic. It was only the third time since 1967 that Parliament has enacted legislation for Antarctica.

The Act makes the necessary changes to UK law to enable us to ratify the 1991 environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty. We hope to be in a position to do so by the end of the year, and certainly well before the next Antarctic treaty consultative meeting scheduled for Seoul in May 1995. The Government are currently working actively on the necessary subsidiary legislation.

The protocol cannot enter into force until it is ratified by all 26 consultative parties to the treaty. So far, nine have done so. It is telling that only two of the nine have so far enacted the necessary enabling legislation—legislation akin to the United Kingdom Antarctic Act 1994.

In terms of enacting legislation to implement the protocol, we remain in the vanguard of the treaty parties. That is fitting, for the United Kingdom has been intimately involved with the protocol since the early days of its gestation. Along with Chile, the United Kingdom called in 1989 for the convening of a meeting to negotiate provisions for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment. What was to emerge from those negotiations was the Madrid protocol, a document developed by the United Kingdom and some like-minded countries.

The environmental protocol is the most significant new element of law introduced into the Antarctic treaty system since the adoption of the Antarctic treaty in 1959. It provides the framework for environmental protection, which was lacking in the treaty. It has, in effect, brought the treaty system up to date and negated any calls which might have been made to carry out a review of the treaty.

The protocol was designed specifically with flexibility in mind. It is a relatively simple framework document. It bans mining for 50 years, unless there is a consensus to do otherwise; it contains general environmental principles; it establishes a new institution; the committee for environmental protection and it sets out inspection and emergency contingency procedures.

The detailed nuts and bolts of the protocol are contained in five annexes, which deal with environmental impact assessment, the conservation of flora and fauna, waste disposal and management, the prevention of marine pollution and protected areas. The annexes can be amended by relatively simple procedures to take account of changing environmental needs. That is important.

We are obliged under article 16 of the protocol to negotiate a further annexe, or annexes, on liability for damage. Those negotiations are under way, and the United Kingdom has played a most active role in the meetings to date.

Clearly, the priority facing the Antarctic treaty parties is the timely entry into force and implementation of the protocol. We will give what encouragement and assistance we can to other parties to ratify soon. I hope that the passage of the Antarctic Act will be one such sign of encouragement.

Implementation rests at both international and national levels. At their 16th meeting in Bonn in 1991, the treaty parties pledged to implement the provisions of the protocol, pending its entry into force, to the greatest extent practical. Individually, many have taken that commitment to heart. Collectively, the parties have, disappointingly, been somewhat slower.

One crucial element to getting the protocol up and running would be the committee for environmental protection—an advisory group to the treaty parties. At the recent treaty meeting in Kyoto, the United Kingdom was to the fore in urging parties to introduce an interim committee to carry out the functions of the committee. We were pleased that the challenge was taken up and a transitional environmental working group will begin work at the next consultative meeting in Seoul. It is a crucial step towards full implementation.

On the national level, the United Kingdom's main Antarctic operator, the British Antarctic Survey, has taken rapid steps to carry out the provisions of the protocol in practice. The BAS has carried out environmental impact assessments of key operations, conducted waste disposal audits, introduced oil spill contingency plans and trained staff to deal with such emergencies and begun a clean-up operation of abandoned British bases in Antarctica.

I must once again accord the Government's thanks to all concerned at the successful adoption of the Antarctic Act. Especially our thanks go to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who sponsored the Bill in this House, and to Viscount Montgomery for sponsoring the Bill in another place.

If the provisions of the protocol are tough, those of the Antarctic Act are equally if not more so. The drafters of the legislation placed considerable emphasis on how best to ensure that United Kingdom nationals in Antarctica and British expeditions to Antarctica comply fully with their obligations under the protocol. That is achieved by a series of tough permitting provisions.

All British expeditions, vessels and ships to Antarctica will require a permit from the Secretary of State. Similarly, British bases in Antarctica will need a permit. Permits will be needed by those undertaking any mineral resource activity and, lastly, permits will be needed to take or interfere with wildlife or enter protected areas.

Overall, the provisions of the Antarctic Act are tough. To ensure that there are no loopholes in the system, we shall be discussing with the dependent territories how to extend the legislation to them. That is particularly important for our territories adjacent to Antarctica—the Falkland Islands and South Georgia—which act as gateway ports to the continent.

I shall take up one point that the hon. Gentleman raised in detail with respect to the fishing zone around South Georgia. The zone is fully consistent with the Antarctic treaty and the Antarctic fisheries convention and has as its sole purpose the more effective implementation of fish conservation measures taken under that convention.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister said that the Government were in discussion with dependent territories—the

Falklands and South Georgia—about the operations of the Antarctic Act. Can he be more specific? Does he mean that there are discussions about how they might be implemented, or about whether the Act applies to them in its entirety?

Mr. Davis: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, he will realise that my briefing is recent. I shall write to him on the detail of the issues he has raised so that we can be absolutely clear.

We have a major opportunity—through, for example, port state jurisdiction—to ensure that vessels or aircraft going to Antarctica from our territories can comply fully with our obligations under the protocol and we shall enforce the measures keenly.

The Antarctic treaty secretariat took up much of the hon. Gentleman's speech. The introduction of a secretariat for the Antarctic treaty would also be of major assistance to the implementation of the environmental protocol.

We have long urged that such a secretariat be set up. Indeed, in the longer term, a secretariat is crucial to the successful operation of the Antarctic treaty system. It is, however, important to stress that the site of the secretariat —I remind the House that we are talking about what would be the most important institution within the Antarctic treaty system—is acceptable to all parties. Treaty parties are active in trying to resolve the matter and we will play an active part. It remains our hope that consensus will be reached before too long.

We still have some work to do to ensure that our domestic legislation is up and running. A number of sections of the Antarctic Act need regulations to be effective and these are now being drafted. They will be laid before the House as soon as possible.

We believe that, through our legislation, we have the ability to ensure that rigorous environmental standards are maintained in Antarctica. We shall do what we can to see that other parties to the treaty do the same.

The hon. Gentleman raised a couple of detailed issues about which I shall have to write to him. I thank him again for giving me the opportunity to make this speech today.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister has given a full reply to most of what I said, but the synthesis of what I was saying is that there is a very strong offer from Argentina to site the Antarctic secretariat in Buenos Aires, and the British Government apparently find it unacceptable. Although the Minister said that there is search for a consensus, he needs to be slightly more forthcoming.

It is not good enough to say that we, as a country, are in the vanguard of the campaign for the protection of the Antarctic and to say that there has to be further discussion to obtain consensus on the siting of the secretariat. As I understand it, the consensus is everybody except Britain. We need a straighter answer from the Government. Are they trying to veto the siting of the secretariat in Argentina and if so why? What are their proposals? The longer the debate goes on, the slower the setting up of a secretariat.

While one welcomes the development of regulations associated with the passage of the Act, surely the operation of the treaty, the protocol and the Act is the important thing —on the ground and in the air. While the British Antarctic Survey is carrying out the provisions of the Act, as passed in this Parliament, other countries are not doing the same. Tour operators are not getting the information and advice that they should be getting and the damage caused to the Antarctic environment by illegal or unqualified tour operators is, in some cases, considerable. Those issues must be resolved—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very long intervention and the House knows my views on interventions.

Mr. Davis: I had drawn my remarks to a close, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I shall reply. As I said, I will write to the hon. Gentleman in detail.

Locating the secretariat in Buenos Aires would unbalance the political relationship between the three counter-claimant states. For that reason, we did not suggest that the institution should be housed in the United Kingdom. We would prefer a site in a more neutral state. Within that context, we are making as much effort as possible to resolve the issue as quickly as we can. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with any more details, if he wishes to press the matter further.

European Union

12.20 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I am most grateful for this opportunity to have a final discussion on this most important topic. It is a great pleasure to welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the Front Bench. He has been translated to the Foreign Office in the recent shuffle. He has had dealings with European matters before, but without saying anything in public, and it is great to see him back.

I noticed during the previous debate that he had already perfected the form of delivery expected from the Foreign Office, and we look forward to hearing more of it. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend's predecessor, who did much in his short tenure of that office to improve the atmosphere in which European issues are discussed in the House. He did much to develop policy towards the next major intergovernmental conference in 1996.

It is most important to recognise the nature of this debate. We are no longer two sides at loggerheads, pro and anti—indeed, we never were. The Maastricht phase of adversarial discussion of European issues is behind us. We are now in a phase of dynamic and positive argument. Rather as in a Greek drama, we play different roles. My hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in Government are heroes, to our role as chorus. We do our best to explain to the audience what is going on as the drama unfolds.

To that end, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) to take part in this debate. They will discuss, respectively, aspects of the Commission and the European Court, and I shall devote my comments to the European Parliament. We hope to give my hon. Friend the Minister plenty of time to catch up on his briefs, as he has been in the job for only 12 hours or thereabouts.

Much of our thinking on the future of those institutions has been set out in our pamphlet, "A Conservative Europe: 1994 and beyond", which was published earlier this year. It was based on the principle of support for the Prime Minister's stated position. He wants a

"Europe of sovereign independent nation states".

In his article in *The Economist* in September last year, he said:

"It is for nations to build Europe, not for Europe to attempt to supersede nations."

That is the basis of the broad consensus that is emerging in the United Kingdom. I notice that even the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on the Opposition Front Bench, which is empty at present, stated his opposition to a federal Europe and advocated a Europe of nation states.

We need to put flesh on those bones and to confront that position with the reality of the European Community today, which is that no other Governments have a concrete policy towards, or are acting towards, our vision of a Europe of nation states. The Community advocates and upholds an inviolate and ever-widening acquis communautaire, and institutions that are devoted to promoting their European vision.

The central institutions of the European Community seem remote to most people. It is not simply a matter of attitude, which can be overcome by generating a sense of European esprit. The institutions' multinational nature will always stand in the way of improving the Community's democratic legitimacy. A multilingual assembly will always look more like an international conference than a functioning Parliament, and a multilingual and multinational debate will never be seen to have the same relevance as national debates, regardless of the availability of translation services.

As the French, "No" campaigner Mr. Philippe Seguin said before the French referendum:

"Democracy is synonymous with the nation state."

Many people have ambitions for the European Parliament to become supreme in the constitutional and legislative role in a European super-state. It will become the heart of a European super-state, and that is the most dangerous and preposterous of all of the federalist ambitions.

There is no example anywhere in the world of a true Parliament that spans nations, cultures and different languages, that does not also have a tendency towards disintegration, misunderstanding, antagonism and even bloodshed. That is not a vision that I share of the future of Europe.

The European Parliament already demonstrates how out of touch it is. Members of the European Parliament are notorious for their lofty detachment from the everyday lives of the citizens of this country. In the recent elections, the people demonstrated their contempt for the European Parliament and its processes. The turnout was the lowest ever in a European election. It was lower than in 1989, when the turnout was lower than in 1983, and that turnout was lower than in 1979. The election was characterised by reactive voting—voters reacted to national issues. People were not voting consciously for a particular type of Europe, or for certain policies in Europe, but reacting to national concerns.

The only constant theme throughout the European Community was a marked sceptical showing in all member states except Germany, which is always able more overtly to present the European project as a German project to its people.

The European Parliament has no more democratic legitimacy than a district council. Naturally, its credibility thus enhanced, it is entirely predictable that it should choose this moment to assert its authority by vetoing Mr. Jacques Santer—the consensus candidate for the presidency of the Commission.

European parliamentarians want to be treated as a 13th state—the European state—or perhaps not, for as we speak we do not yet have the result of the vote. Perhaps they will realise that their real authority is as thin as the paper on which the treaties are printed.

Earlier this week, however, the European Parliament obstructed the liberalisation of telecommunications in Europe. It is absurd that the principal institution devoted to the integration of Europe should want to stop us talking more freely and cheaply to each other. In truth, the Parliament has become an expensive, ridiculous, undemocratic, power hungry, unaccountable, obstructive encumbrance on the efficient working of the Union. It is a Parliament without a state, and unless Europe becomes a state it must remain so—

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): A Parliament in a state.

Mr. Jenkin: True enough.

In 1996, we shall need practical proposals on how to reform the working of the Parliament. The role of national

Parliaments needs to be enhanced, and the European Parliament needs to be smaller, more efficient and primarily devoted to auditing, accounting and reporting. Its potentially obstructive legislative role should be curbed. It should become more accountable to national Parliaments: a counterbalance to the Council of Ministers, which is accountable to national Governments.

I ask my hon. Friend for only one assurance on a subject likely to be on the agenda before 1996. It concerns the method of electing European parliamentarians. In the spirit of subsidiarity I would urge my hon. Friend to give us an assurance that the United Kingdom Parliament will continue to decide how our representatives to the European Parliament are elected. Will he undertake to continue to use the veto against a uniform system of elections?

12.29 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): This is a much more important debate than the half hour or so allocated to it suggests. At this very moment—as the clock strikes 12.30 pm—the European Parliament is exercising a power conferred on it to decide whether it wishes to veto the appointment of the president of the Commission. We do not yet know the result, but I hope that it will be known in the course of these proceedings.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the course of yesterday's rather fraught proceedings in the European Parliament, the British Labour group decided —typically, the meeting was attended by only 16 people —to veto this particular gentleman? The Parliament has now called for a permanent place for a representative of the European Parliament alongside the Heads of Government. There is thus more to the matter than just vetoing an individual; these people are calling for a complete change in the structure of what my hon. Friend is about to discuss.

Mr. Cash: Yes, indeed. It is precisely this usurpation of power, accompanied by an abuse of power, that has characterised what has been done under articles 100A and 180A. These are the powers conferred by Governments on the European Parliament and the Commission—yet the latter always deny it. The Commission claims that a decentralising process is under way, yet anyone with any competence knows that the reverse is true. Certainly no one in Europe believes it. The Commission continually refers to an increase in the powers that are needed. The word "integration" by definition means more centralisation. Those are exactly the views of Mr. Santer, who apparently agrees with Mr. Dehaene. Europe will continue along these lines until we say no to the increases in the powers being demanded by Europe.

The intergovernmental conference is to be preceded by the so-called reflection group, set up at the Corfu summit. According to the Minister's predecessor at the Foreign Office, informal papers are already being put about to deal with the issue. The fact is that the IGC offers the Government a golden opportunity to put into effect what they say they want from time to time but never seem to implement—decreasing the powers of the European Commission.

In April 1990 I published a Bow Group pamphlet which I circulated to the House of Commons and in which I argued that we should reduce the powers of the Commission to those of the secretariat, at the same time increasing the scrutiny process both in our national Parliament and in the Parliaments of the rest of Europe. The pamphlet was written when we had a different Prime Minister. Four years later, we are no further forward with these ideas—although only yesterday I heard another former Foreign Office Minister of State propounding my idea as if it were one of his own.

The necessity to do so is increased because of the amount of power that is being arrogated by the European Commission. The power to initiate legislation can be reduced only by taking the measures that I have described and by allowing the Council of Ministers the power to initiate legislation and to bring the veto back into play, not in the intermediate stages, when one is trying to arrive at an agreement, but when a national Parliament says, "Up with this we will not put." One could then secure the necessary consent.

The key point that completely escapes the Euro establishment, the Foreign Office, other Departments of State and the highest levels of Government, is that one cannot make the changes that are proposed unless one secures the people's consent. People are being taken down a route that, in their view, does not make any sense. That is why they reacted as they did in the European elections recently. They knew that they were being taken for a ride and they did not like it.

Germany was the only country that saw an increase in support for the pursuit of the European policy. That was because Mr. Kohl played the German national card. Elsewhere, results were different. In the United Kingdom, only 36 per cent. of the electorate turned out. Even in Holland, a mere 36 per cent. turned out. In his excellent remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said that we should reduce the European Parliament's powers so that it is more accountable to the people who are supposed to elect it, few as they are. The other key point is that, at the same time, we should ensure that such bureaucracy without responsibility and without accountability is brought to heel.

Mr. Jenkin: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The way in which European Standing Committees work is good in part, but we have only one shot at lengthy European proposals. The Government are then allowed to go off, negotiate, decide and conclude matters. We never get a Third Reading or a final look at the final document, and we are never able to express a final opinion on what the Government decide to accept in Brussels. Such accountability is not nearly strong enough, particularly if one considers the huge volume of European legislation with which we are likely to deal once the new Commission is established and starts to implement the Maastricht treaty in full.

Mr. Cash: I agree with every word that my hon. Friend says. I issue a word of friendly advice to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has just taken up his new job. His predecessors have moved in an extremely dangerous zone in relation to the Select Committee on European Legislation. Such a Committee should be replicated throughout the European Community. France and many other member states operate by decree. We have a scrutiny process, but it does no good if Ministers in the Foreign Office or other Departments seek to bypass, in a most outrageous manner, proposals from the European

[Mr. Cash]

Commission. Proposals need to be scrutinised by us, because they will not be properly scrutinised by the European Parliament.

I should like to refer to the matter that is before the European Parliament: the allegedly proposed veto of Mr. Santer by the socialists in the European Parliament. In the past few weeks, we have witnessed an example of comedy —Greek or otherwise—turning into burlesque followed by farce. The way in which the matter has been handled is reprehensible to all hon. Members, as elected representatives of our constituents.

As I said in my comments on the Prime Minister's statement, we were told that we vetoed Mr. Dehaene as the unelected president of the Commission because it appeared that Germany and France were running the European Community, but Mr. Santer is fundamentally no different from Mr. Dehaene, and it was with some wry amusement that I heard him say that he is indistinguishable from Mr. Dehaene.

Mr. Duncan Smith: He is taller.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps he is, but I wonder whether he is fatter.

Mr. Santer may now be vetoed by the European Parliament, which shows that we, through our Government, have given more power to the European institutions than has been warranted. That will be remedied only by taking the steps that I have suggested.

The Minister of State is seeking advice. I hope that his search will be fruitful and that he will give a responsible reply to our points. I strongly urge him to answer a question that I put at the end of my most recent book on the subject, "Europe: The Crunch"—is anyone listening?

It may interest those who read our proceedings in *Hansard* to know that, despite the timing of the debate, a significant number of my hon. Friends are present to register their interest in the subject. If the Government are prepared to listen, changes will be made with some enthusiasm and co-operation, reflecting the fact that those who last year were regarded as heretics are now, according to general consent, backed forcefully by 70 per cent. of public opinion not only in the United Kingdom but elsewhere in Europe.

If we are to secure the necessary consent, it is equally important for the Euro-elites—the Governments of the European Community—to respond to the views of the Euro-realists and to bear in mind that we carry a potent message: that if they do not listen to us, and I sincerely hope that I can convey this as advice rather than a threat, things will get worse. The powers of the European Commission must be considered with the powers of the other institutions.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Bearing in mind what my hon. Friend said about the need to achieve consent for the European process, does he think that the Euro-sceptics are misnamed, and that they should be called Euro-democrats?

Mr. Cash: That is a superb suggestion. I like to refer to us as Euro-realists, but Euro-democrats is even better.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my hon. Friend read any significance into the fact that not one of the Euro-realists, who, based on their voting records last year, might be characterised as Euro-sceptics, was included in the reshuffle yesterday?

Mr. Cash: That has certainly proved that being right does not necessarily lead to one's views being accepted. That is the point that I am trying to make.

Far too much is at stake. We are living in historic times. President Clinton has said that he thinks that Germany should lead Europe and he and his colleagues have said that we should have a single currency. I heard expressed at the very highest level of American diplomatic circles only two days ago the view that we are bound to accept the concept of a single currency, a concept that this Parliament will reject, or should reject.

The matters with which we are dealing extend into the realms of foreign policy, defence and the whole of our Westminster democracy. Some time ago a motion before the House dealt with the power of the Crown. The power of the European Commission has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.

12.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has taken a dramatic initiative in giving us the opportunity for this debate. We await the result of a vote in another place that is a little further away than the other place to which we usually refer. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the alleged veto. Article 158 of the European Union treaty as amended states:

"The President and the other members of the Commission thus nominated shall be subject as a body to a vote of approval by the European Parliament."

As the other members of the body of the Commission have not, as far as I know, been appointed, any vote in the European Parliament today—which may have already taken place although we do not know the result—would be an opinion. It is within the rights of that Parliament to express an opinion; but, as I understand it, it is not a substantive vote for which article 158 allows.

I suggest to the hon. Member for Colchester, North and to the Minister, who may not wish to comment, because this is all at very short notice, that the fundamental constitution of the European Union/Community will get into a bit of a tangle. While it may be true that any vote being taken at this moment or already taken, whatever the result, is not substantive, it will certainly have influence and people will talk about it.

Any young Parliament that wishes to flex its muscles will use opportunities to show that it has political relevance, although as I say, technically, the vote may just be a reflection of opinion. We have not sufficiently appreciated that the European Parliament, like this Parliament, gained power by increasing its power over legislation, expenditure and administration.

Although I am in favour of European co-operation in an international sense, from the year dot I have regarded the constitution of the European Community as incorporating three institutions of government—the Commission, the Parliament and the Council. They are engaged in what might be called a triangular tug of war and the vote today, whatever its outcome, is part of that contest, which is a political as much as a constitutional contest. If there is to

be a referee in that triangular tug of war, which might be a new sport, then of course it is the European Commission Court of Justice.

12.48 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister and I know that he would shortly like to reply to the debate. At last we can listen to him rather than just watch him in his place, as we did throughout the Maastricht process. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that it is sad that the Minister's predecessor has moved on, because he did much to articulate many of our concerns.

Today, in line with my other hon. Friends, I want briefly to raise the issue of the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that Mr. Santer has been accepted by the European Parliament by a vote of—apparently—260 in favour and 230 against, with a number of abstentions.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I must admit that it seems rather strange for us to be taken to the brink by a Parliament which is distant and not altogether welcomed, necessarily, by the people in this country, judging by their voting record.

However, I shall continue on the issue of the European Court of Justice. Before Maastricht, that court, which was so critical to the formation and function of the Community, was completely unknown. If we have done one thing, it is to raise its profile. It is my belief and that of many others that that court is at the crux of many of the problems in the European Community. It is an innovative and interpretative court, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said on a recent ten-minute Bill.

As I have said before, as has been published in an excellent pamphlet, "Game, Set and Match?", which contains selected speeches from the Maastricht process, which I recommend to my hon. Friend the Minister, and as others have said since, the court was based on the Conseil d'Etat. It is worth looking at the structure of the Conseil d'Etat in France, because one then fully understands how close it is to the European Court of Justice in seeing its role in an almost executive style of Government. For example, in its annual report, the Conseil d'Etat in France publishes all the legislative reforms which it deems necessary and acts, at the same time, as the legal adviser and supreme administrative court to the French Government.

If we are in any doubt about the ethos of the European Court of Justice, I shall cite two quotations from the pamphlet to which I referred. Some time ago, Advocate-General Lagrange said:

"the Court must not be defeated by obscurities or contradictions in the wording of the text for the real meaning can be deduced from the context or the spirit of the text."

At a later stage, Advocate-General Roemer said:

"the European treaties are nothing but a partial implementation of a grand general programme, dominated by the idea of a complete integration of the European States."

That, of course, sets the whole scene for the European Court of Justice and the way in which it has proceeded and been made competent by constant reference to the spirit of the treaty and has filled gaps with teleological interpretation.

I raise that point with my hon. Friend as he starts his new duties as Minister today, so that he may take a long look at the European Court of Justice. The Minister's predecessor but one, our right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), tried to reassure us during the debates on Maastricht that the court was no longer centralising, but decentralising, even though I had put forward a number of cases to demonstrate that it had been centralising over a very long period.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North, in his ten-minute Bill the other day, demonstrated that the then Minister's view was hope over experience because my hon. Friend quoted a number of cases since the Maastricht debates that have demonstrated quite the opposite and which are infecting our own court process. The European Court of Justice is critical, as it demonstrates the ratchet effect which has been talked of so often.

To end my speech, I should like to make some simple recommendations, which my hon. Friend may think about, and not necessarily answer today, but put in the round for 1996. First, we should recommend that new rules for the European Court of Justice's mandating of all deliberations be held in public and, rather than the unitary judgments now given, dissenting opinion should be expressed simultaneously with the majority position and the opinions of the advocates-general. Secondly, we should bring forward legislation that specifies that new justices and advocates-general have at least three years' direct judicial experience on the bench in national courts, thus barring political appointees and legal professionals without judicial experience from appointment.

Thirdly, we should establish the practice of seconding European Community judges from national legal systems and, fourthly, we should require a new procedure in the ECJ to allow the misuse of treaty powers to be rectified immediately, similar to an action for a declaration in the British courts.

I urge my hon. Friend to please take note that the ECJ is the most dangerous and the most centralising institution in the Community. I hope that we look to do something in 1996 to repair that damage.

12.54 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

It is with some sense of deja vu that I stand at the Dispatch Box. I think that I have been free and easy in accepting oral interventions and speeches. That is partly because this might be a sort of celebration of our reunion on these matters.

We have had many robust discussions in the past, although not publicly, on issues relating to the institutional structures to which we are directing our attention this afternoon. I hope and trust that we shall continue to have robust discussions while adopting a constructive and creative attitude to the development of our ideas as we run into 1996.

With that theme, I thank hon. Members who have paid proper credit to my predecessor for the excellent job that he did over the past year in developing our policy and presenting it with his ministerial colleagues. I refer, of course, to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory). Perhaps the best thing that I could hope for would be successfully to continue with my hon. Friend's successful work.

I note, too, that the Opposition Front Bench is completely empty. It strikes me that its emptiness is a

[Mr. David Davis]

suitable comment on their policies on these matters. I do not expect that that policy will change as a result of the other election that took place in an interesting representative institution elsewhere at the same time today as the election of the new leader of the Labour party.

The future institutional structure of the European Union is of fundamental importance to the United Kingdom. Our approach to institutional issues in Europe is guided by the same principles that determine our approach to all European Union matters. We believe that the Union must be competitive, not least so that it can cope with the huge challenge that is posed by unemployment throughout the 12 member states.

The European Union must be open. It must be open for trade and open to other European countries that can meet the criteria for joining it. It must be flexible and capable of adapting to the needs of member states while maintaining the core disciplines that are essential to the successful functioning of the Union as a whole.

Part of the flexibility is the operation of the so-called pillar structure. There are clear advantages in acting together, when possible, in foreign and security policy as well as in justice and home affairs matters. That can be done successfully only on an intergovernmental basis and under a different set of rules from those that apply to Community business.

Vigorous application of subsidiarity is vital. We must act at European Community level only when it is absolutely necessary to do so.

The institutions of the European Union must be able to cope with the requirements that are placed on them by the demanding agenda that is before us. At the centre of the institutional structure will remain the Council of Ministers, which is formed by the representatives of the elected Governments of the member states.

The Council will continue to work under the direction of the European Council of Heads of Government, which provides general political guidelines for the Union as a whole.

The Commission and the European Court of Justice have a crucial role in ensuring compliance with treaties and with Community legislation. The European Parliament has significant powers to hold the Commission to account, and we know that it has exercised them in one respect today. The Parliament has a growing role in shaping legislation. The Court of Auditors monitors and investigates all expenditure.

I have given the briefest of overviews of our general approach to the institutional structure of the Union. I shall now respond in a more detailed fashion to more specific issues.

The Commission has an important role to play as the Union's executive, as its referee—we have heard about the three-way tug of war—and as the initiator of legislation. We disagree from time to time with the Commission, but we must remember that it often acts in our interests by enforcing competition and single market rules.

The recent case of landing rights at Orly airport is a good example of that. Another good example is the BSE case. The Commission needs powers to police effectively. For our part, we need to ensure that the Commission is efficient, accountable and remains committed to the goals set by successive European Councils.

With regard to the European Court of Justice, a strong rule of law in the Community is essential to British interests. We abide by our Community obligations and we must be sure that other member states are equally scrupulous. We therefore fully support the ECJ in its judicial role.

However, I recognise concerns that have been expressed in the House about certain decisions taken by the ECJ and the way in which it—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We now come to the debate on the route of the channel tunnel through Barking. I call the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge).

Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Barking)

1 pm

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): As I have been a Member of the House for such a short time, it is a privilege to be given the opportunity to speak in one of the last Adjournment debates of this Session on a topic which is of such paramount importance to my constituents. The focus of politics today for all sides of the House may be concentrated elsewhere rather than here, but I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise on the Floor of the House issues which mean so much to the people of Barking.

We are about to rise for a long recess when some of the worries and stresses of our lives will temporarily be lifted from our shoulders. There is no such respite for the people of Barking. My constituents face a summer of anxiety, worry, uncertainty and anger with the threat of the channel tunnel rail link route coming through the heart of our town, destroying the homes and lives of hundreds of families in my constituency.

Let me start by making it clear that I and my constituents, including those who are most directly affected by the tunnel, support the plans to establish a high-speed rail link connecting the channel tunnel to all parts of Britain. We are not displaying selfish nimbyism. We are saying that another solution must, and can, be found for Barking which does not destroy the homes, the environment and the lives of so many of the people in my constituency.

Nowhere along the entire route of the channel tunnel rail link in Britain are so many people so adversely affected by the Government's plans. Frankly, I find the plans grotesque. I believe that they represent a betrayal of trust on the Government's part: trust which the ordinary people place in the Government, and trust built on the belief that the Government will act in the interests of all the people throughout the country.

If my constituency had been a Tory marginal, with the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would not have seen the proposals even reach the light of day. However, the people of Barking do not vote Tory. One of the reasons I was returned with such an historic majority for Labour, and the reason why the Conservative vote collapsed in Barking, was that the people of Barking feel that they have been abandoned by the Government. They are very angry.

What is good enough for the people of Kent must be good enough for the people of Barking. My constituents are ordinary working people. They are not Tory voters and they do not live in a marginal Tory seat. Nor are they like the articulate media pack and legal brigade in Islington where I live which lobbied the Government. However, the people of Kent and the people of Islington wrought concessions to minimise the environmental impact of the channel tunnel rail link. All I am asking for is fair and equal treatment for the people of Barking.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Hodge: In a moment.

It is the Government's duty to govern in the interests of all our citizens and it is on that ground that I ask for a fair deal in respect of the proposals for my constituency.

Mr. Rowe: Will the hon. Lady give way now?

Ms Hodge: I am anxious to finish my speech in 15 minutes. This is my only opportunity to raise the matter on behalf of my constituents.

Let me deal with the impact of the proposal. The Minister for Transport in London has visited the area. He will know that more than 1,000 homes are directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. In answer to a recent parliamentary question, the Government admitted that the boundaries of as many as 321 homes in Barking are directly adjacent to the rail track. That is more than anywhere in Kent or in Islington.

The proposal tears the heart out of Barking. It destroys the basis of the community in that part of London. It also destroys the Government's own stated objective of urban regeneration and renewal. Take the heart out of Barking and we will destroy the integrity of the community.

The homes in which those people live are not luxurious suburban residences, they are homes that were built for war heroes. In answer to a parliamentary question, the Government admitted that the distance from the back wall of the nearest house to the track is 2.5 m. I am not terribly good at estimating distances, but I guess that that is closer than the distance between the Minister and myself.

Trains currently pass the area at about 47 mph. Fast trains will go through at 185 mph. That will make an enormous difference. From calculations that I have had to make because the Government have been unable to provide me with proper estimates, at peak times there will be one train every three minutes going past the homes of people in Barking, at a distance of 2.5 m from their kitchens. We must add to that the problem of freight traffic. Again, the Government's estimates suggest that, instead of the 6.1 million tonnes of freight traffic in 1993, 16.4 million tonnes of freight will be carried on that track. In 2013, there will be a further adverse impact on the quality of the lives of people living close to the track.

We have had some noise measurements. I believe that they are inadequate. Even the measurements that have been published to date show—again I make a comparison with Islington, the borough of which I used to be the leader —in Islington 45 properties were affected by noise in excess of 85 DBA. In Barking, 325 properties will be so affected, yet the Government have no proposals on the table to ameliorate the quality of life. There are also vibration levels.

The only solution that has been suggested so far is that there should be 10 ft high walls between the rail track and peoples' homes. Again I stress the 2.5 m distance. A 10 ft high wall will do absolutely nothing for people if they have to look out at a mass of concrete. It will be claustrophobic. That is not the environmental protection that we should enjoy today.

Who will be affected? Some are tenants, some are owner-occupiers. The tenants have no escape; they are locked into the homes in which they have lived happily for many years. Owner-occupiers are finding their properties blighted. At the peak of the market, their homes were worth £80,000 to £85,000. We all accept that, to some extent, the market has collapsed, but people cannot sell their homes in that area of Barking. One could probably sell for £20,000 to £25,000, but nobody would give a mortgage on such a home, so we are talking about cash purchasers, most of whom are private landlords who would turn the area into bedsit territory, which again would impact on the sense of community which is so important in that part of London.

[Ms Hodge]

I shall tell hon. Members about three people who have written to me; I have received hundreds of letters. One is a woman who moved into her house when she was just married. She now has three children and she is locked into a two-bedroom house which she cannot sell. The children are now reaching their teens. Another constituent is an old-age pensioner who has an asbestos-related disease and who wants to move, but he cannot sell to move somewhere which would give him the chance to live longer.

The third constituent is a woman whose mother lived down the road. When her mother died, she wanted to sell her mother's house so that she could afford to put her children through higher education. Nobody will buy the house and, as a result, her children are being prevented from achieving their aspiration of an opportunity in life.

I wish to deal with a couple of other issues which are of concern to me. We have found that Union Rail is not giving us the information that we require, and we are living in uncertainty and secrecy. My constituents have a right to know. On the issue of freight, there is no clear information.

In November 1993, a representative from Union Rail assured residents of Scruttons Farm that there were no plans for a railhead at Ripple lane. I now understand that Union Rail may have plans to build two railheads in Renwick road and Scruttons, and the Secretary of State has announced that there will be a freight link to Ripple lane.

There has been an intensification of use, and nobody knows why. Union Rail and British Rail have said that they are maintaining and upgrading the line, but I believe that they are preparing for the intensification of use by freight trains and avoiding paying compensation to residents in the area.

On compensation levels, there is no clear information for residents on the level of compensation, and it is unclear how many residents will get compensation. The levels of compensation have yet to be set, and they will be set by private sector companies which will have control of building the channel tunnel rail link. This is a matter of public policy, which ought to be determined by the Government. The veil of secrecy and uncertainty is unacceptable, and I ask Ministers to ensure that, in the interests of my constituents, we bring an end to it.

Is there an alternative? In Kent and Islington, work was done on other options, and in Kent, five options were worked out to see which was the most feasible. Why cannot we have some investigation of other options in Barking? There has been unanimous support within the community for the channel tunnel rail link to be tunnelled under Barking Reach. That is an empty piece of land, and the project would not impact on the future plans for the reach or on the current residents. Other options were also available for consideration.

Some £2.7 billion is being spent on the project, and all I am asking is that we should investigate. If it costs another £50 million or £60 million, it will be a worthwhile investment for the long-term benefit which it would bring to my community. I am concerned that there is has not been a proper estimate of costs and that other costs have not been taken into consideration.

For example, I do not know—perhaps the Minister might enlighten me—what the cost of the disruption to the current freight and passenger services will be during the construction of services on Tilbury dock.

I ask the Minister to assure me today on three matters. First, he will recognise that there is a case to answer to which he and the new Ministers should now give consideration. Secondly, he should cost all the other options so that at least we can be objective about providing the channel tunnel rail link which we all want. Thirdly, he should leave a mechanism in place in the Bill which gives us time for consultation and for consideration. That may mean widening the limits of deviation around the proposed route so that the alternative under Barking Reach can be considered.

If Jo Richardson had not been so ill during her latter years, I am sure that we would never have got to the position today where the interests of thousands of Barking residents are being ignored, while the interests of other people along the route from Islington down to Kent have been acknowledged. I am asking the Minister to pause for thought, and to give us one more opportunity to provide a sensible and lasting solution. We all want the rail link, but not at the price of destroying a community, destroying people's homes, destroying their environment and destroying their future.

1.14 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): In supporting the points made so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) on behalf of her constituents, I draw attention to a further issue related to the link as it passes through Barking and the rest of east London. It is clear that significant environmental problems will be caused by the link, whatever the ultimate route. If, as I hope, my hon. Friend is successful in persuading the Government to choose an alternative route through Barking, problems will arise with tunnelling. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) recently convened a meeting with Union Rail to discuss those problems.

In 1991, the then Secretary of State, announcing the east London route for the link told the House of Commons:

"the line will be built through east London, where the prospect is welcomed for the economic regeneration that it will bring."—[*Official Report*, 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 26.]

Local authorities in east London in Barking, Dagenham, Newham to the west and Havering to the east are imaginative and enterprising. The Secretary of State was right: the authorities spotted from the outset the potential for the link to provide the stimulus for economic regeneration in the area that we so desperately need.

Yet it is plain as a pikestaff that there can be no regeneration in east London from the link if there is no international station in east London. Stratford now appears to be the only place where there is still a possibility of an international station in east London. It is now the only way to unlock the potential that the Government rightly identified for economic regeneration in Barking and the rest of east London.

I understand that an announcement is imminent on the matter and that the new ministerial team at the Department of Transport wants to consider the matter before making the announcement. That is entirely proper. I understand that. I urge the Minister to ensure that the announcement contains a commitment to the long box at Stratford so that the Stratford station remains a possibility. Beyond that, there should also be a commitment to the international

station as a integral part of the scheme so that the regeneration benefits that Barking and east London need, and that the Government have promised, will materialise.

1.17 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): With the leave of the House, I congratulate the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) on securing this debate. It is about what she and I know to be an extremely important issue, not least for those of her constituents whom she has properly represented today. As she knows, during the past few months and indeed, the past few years, Ministers in the Department of Transport have received a number of representations from local residents, the borough and members of the borough council. Councillor George Brooker has a been frequent and assiduous correspondent on the issue and has met Ministers on several occasions.

I shall merely leave on the record the points made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) about the choice of intermediate stations. My job is merely to confirm that the choice of stations will be made shortly and, more importantly, in time for inclusion in the Bill and to confirm, as he probably knows, that it is assumed that the Bill will be ready for November and, subject to the parliamentary timetable, will be brought before the House.

I shall savour and enjoy for some months to come the description by the hon. Member for Barking of her erstwhile constituents in Islington as the articulate media pack, the chattering classes' chattering class, as we always knew them to be in Islington. It would be churlish of me to suggest that the hon. Lady was to some degree the doyenne of such a pack, but none the less, whither Islington these days and welcome to Barking and a more realistic view of life than occasionally is held in the borough of Islington.

Without descending into political point scoring, as I do not see it as a Labour-Tory issue, it is clear to me, having looked at a great many major schemes over the years in the Department, that not the slightest influence is brought to bear by the excellent officials, whose job it is to do the basic work, on the voting preference of those who live adjacent to schemes, whether they are Tory grandees living alongside road schemes that happened to impinge on the fields at the bottom of their rolling acres or the residents of the hon. Lady's constituency; that simply is not a material consideration. On reflection, the hon. Lady might not want to pursue that point, as it would be a reflection on the integrity of officials, which, with her long experience of local government, she would not like to cast.

The hon. Lady was good at defining the problem. There was some excellent hyperbole and my emotions were drawn and strung but, sadly, she said very little about any proposed solution.

In the next few minutes I shall give a little of the background to where we are on the rail link and try to address in a practical way what the actual solutions are. The hon. Lady made it clear—I am grateful to her for doing so—that she is not opposed to the idea of a second rail link and neither are the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms). We are discussing the practical way of delivering that rail link in that part of London, and what the hon. Lady said about the impact of the link and the difficulty there will always be —which no doubt she has faced in other fields because of her long career in local government—in trying to find the right way through.

As she will recall, the decision was taken in 1991 for the rail link to run from Kent to King's Cross St. Pancras via the so-called easterly approach and, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-east said, to assist in the regeneration and development of the east Thames corridor.

Since the announcement of the general easterly approach, we have done a great deal of work and I would like to express my appreciation of the work of Union Rail over the past few years. I can appreciate that, in the nature of things, there will inevitably be some conflict between those who represent affected residents and Union Rail as, in effect, the proposer of the scheme. My experience has been that Union Rail is an excellent and professional organisation. If the hon. Lady believes that information is being withheld and kept secret by Union Rail in a manner that she believes to be unreasonable, I shall certainly ask Union Rail at the highest level to consider carefully the specific points she raised and I shall endeavour to let her have the information.

Of course there are considerations of commercial confidentiality, but in general it is a matter for the whole community to resolve and issues of secrecy do not arise.

Union Rail submitted its report in March 1993 which proposed a route for consultation which ran through Barking largely on the surface. There was then a period of further work and consultation. The results of that work were reported in Union Rail's October 1993 report. The Government decisions on the route were announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State on 24 January this year.

Part of the conclusions reached then included the route of the rail link through Barking. The March 1993 route ran from the portal of the London tunnel to the south-east of the existing Barking station—the route that the rail link would run on the surface along the existing London-Tilbury and Southend railway corridor through Barking. As the hon. Lady says, I and other Ministers at the Department have visited that part of the route on a number of occasions.

The hon. Lady mentioned a tunnel option for Barking as one of the proposals, and then spoke about Barking region. I shall try to relate the two.

Following the announcement of the March 1993 route, and during the subsequent consultations, Union Rail worked up a tunnel option, which was included in the October 1993 report. The option would have extended the London tunnel by about 1.8 km, along a similar alignment to the surface route, thus moving the portal further east to the Ripple area. It was estimated that the tunnel would cost £40 million and the figure could be reduced to between £20 million and £25 million if only one tunnel boring machine were used. That would also introduce a six-month delay in the programme, however.

We were not convinced that the tunnel was the right answer, especially as the scope for further mitigation of the route remained. Yes, it would be in the shape of different types of noise barriers. Also, the modest extension to the property purchase and compensation policy announced at the same time, which would allow hardship terms to be offered for cases in which a home qualified for noise insulation under the draft noise insulation regulations, should help in some cases.

[Mr. Steve Norris]

I am clear that the construction of the rail link through that area of Barking will need to be carried out in a sympathetic manner and in line with an agreed code of construction practice, to minimise the inconvenience to the local community.

Since then, my right hon. Friend, the former Minister for Public Transport, the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), has met Councillor Brooker, who further pressed for the Barking tunnel option, which was included in the October 1993 report. We made it clear to George Brooker that, after carefully considering the points made, the January 1994 decision stood.

Incidentally, on the hon. Lady's proposal, some of the residents of Essex road and other roads in the area said that they were rather worried about the tunnel option there because, in the short term, it would lead to the existing line carrying increased freight traffic, for which they would receive no compensation, and there would be a possibility of vibration from the tunnel underneath their homes.

I am afraid that at that stage there were already widely divergent views, not only on the benefits of the existing option, but on the merits of the 1993 proposal—the tunnel.

On the question of the tunnel under Barking Reach, which was more in line with the original Ove Arup route, as the hon. Lady was told in answer to a parliamentary question this week, we have not received detailed advice on the feasibility or the additional cost of routing the rail link under Barking Reach, and I shall give some of the reasons. That sort of tunnel would affect the flagship east Thames corridor development site there, which is very near to the council's heart.

Ms Hodge *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Norris: If the hon. Lady disagrees with that proposition, in all seriousness, I invite her—together with the council, if necessary—to let me have at an early stage chapter and verse on precisely why she has come to that conclusion. The route would also pass very near Ford, Barking power station, the A13 extension and so forth. The proposition might require a new route to be devised for the rail link all the way to Stratford, which is very important as it would affect many more properties than the present route, which closely follows the existing railway corridor.

I was looking at the route that that option would take and the hon. Lady is more than welcome to see me, or whichever one of my hon. or right hon. Friends is given direct responsibility for the project, to find out precisely what the impact would be. I have always found the hon. Lady to be a reasonable soul and I cannot believe that she would not care about the many additional properties that would be affected by the Barking Reach option. It is utterly symptomatic of her party's pathetic approach to public expenditure that she brushes the cost aside. She says, "Fifty to £80 million—well if it has to be, it has to be, after all, it is a jolly big sum of money, isn't it?"

I suppose that that is one basis on which to monitor public accounting, but it is not one that I commend to her. If she is late for the coronation that is taking place elsewhere in our great city, or if she has not been invited, I am sure that it will not be long before she manages to re-ingratiate herself with the chattering-class leadership of her party, when she might discuss with those who have some responsibility for finance in her party whether they are prepared to be quite so cavalier with public finances as she suggested.

We shall take forward this project sensibly and responsibly. As far as possible, and within the limits imposed by those who propose such major constructions, we shall consider any serious proposals that may achieve what the local community wants, with the least possible disruption.

Neither the hon. Lady nor I had the opportunity to touch on some of the subsidiary issues today, but I want to make it clear that this need not be the end of the discussion. I know that the new Secretary of State will be more than willing to listen to what she has to say, and so will I. As far as practicable, we shall reflect on whether any of her additional points can be accommodated.

National and Local Government

1.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): To have two Ministers on the Front Bench for a debate of this sort is a work of remarkable supererogation. It gives me the opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on arriving in his new position.

This is an ambitious subject for a short debate, so it will inevitably be perfunctory. The House has become increasingly interested lately in its own proceedings. That is good, because Parliament is losing its power as the world becomes a global village. One result of that is the emergence of the European Union. Despite the Canutes who again this morning have been trying to brush sand in the direction of the incoming tide, it is clear that power will continue to move gradually away from this place and towards Europe.

So far, our reaction has been petulant and ineffective. Mostly, decisions in the European Union are made by the Executive, and are reported, sooner or later or not at all, to this House. The European Parliament has just been given new powers. I hope that it will use them particularly to call the European Executive to account. There is fraud, there is incompetence and there is the sheer difficulty of enforcing regulations; there is plenty for the European Parliament to do. Will it do it? What will our response be?

No serious attempt has yet been made to forge and maintain links between Members of Parliament here and Members of the European Parliament. We are now entitled to one free visit a year to the EU—an act of astonishing generosity. No attempt has been made to provide video conferencing facilities between ourselves and Members of the European Parliament. As far as I can ascertain, there are virtually no serious institutional joint committees—yet increasingly our fate and that of the European Parliament are interwoven.

We are always told that there are problems of time; as a matter of fact, we could have much less to do here, and we could make much better use of Members' time. The worst feature of the British system of government is the Government's under-use of Back Benchers of all parties. Why cannot we work out a timetable to allow Back Benchers to play a serious role in Europe on the United Kingdom's behalf? It seems to me that the United Kingdom system demands more and more legislation about less and less.

The Chamber is a good forum for debating issues of public concern, but it does so far too rarely. We could debate issues such as euthanasia or genetic engineering, but we leave far too little time for that, even though these topics command considerable interest among the British public.

We also face a new menace: the media. There is a new threat of harassment—of scrutiny beyond the norm—if any Member of Parliament raises his head above the parapet in an attempt to check the media. Of course, it is all done in the name of accountability to the public, but it is actually counter-productive. What the public need are Members of Parliament who are increasingly willing to defend their constituents and institutions from the overmighty media. A new balance must be struck.

The word "privilege" has been misunderstood; it should enable Members of Parliament, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said last night, to serve the public free from restrictions. In a way, one of the most sinister developments has been the advance of Berlusconi. I have nothing against him—I do not know him at all—but for someone to make their way to Parliament basically on the back of owning a massive media empire and a couple of football teams is dangerous, and we need to consider it more closely.

The Government's reaction to the erosion of powers is to interfere ever more closely in the lower tiers of government. In principle, the Government claim that they have delegated powers to national health service trusts, schools, housing associations and other organisations. If they had the courage of their convictions, how good that would be. Their nerve, however, has failed. At every turn, they have imposed constraints on their creatures.

NHS trusts still operate in the shadow of Whitley. They cannot hire and fire consultants without incurring ludicrous costs. They are severely limited in making their own arrangements on contracts. Schools, having been set national curriculum targets, are still not free to choose how to reach them. Even hours of teaching are prescribed,, despite recent research that shows there is no correlation between the hours spent teaching and the results achieved. The methods of teaching are frequently prescribed and one of the results is that professionals feel deskilled.

An enormous amount of power has been removed from local authorities. Planning appeals are so widespread that they emasculate planning committees. The capacity to raise income locally has been circumscribed. The right to be significantly different from neighbouring authorities has, effectively, been largely undermined. The public pressure for uniform standards has been allowed to triumph over the encouragement of local democracy.

That brings me to the local government review, a policy development that I deeply regret. If ever there was a case of putting the cart before the horse, this is it. Instead of asking what local government in the 21st century is for, we have leapt in to change the machinery of local government. No serious debate has been held on the balance of power between central and local government. No attempt has been made to link local government with the health service, despite the shift from institutions for care towards care in the community.

No serious attempt has been made to recognise one of the biggest changes in the United Kingdom: the growth in the sophistication and education of the public. The effect of that change is everywhere, yet instead of making coherent attempts to harness it for more responsible local government, we have let it be funnelled almost exclusively into pressure groups and single-issue lobbies which are increasingly distorting national policies.

Like everywhere else, Kent is faced with recommendations from the local government commission which resemble the mule of antiquity, which it was said had neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity. We must choose between structures that set citizen against citizen, councillor against councillor, and that split the county's Members of Parliament down the middle.

It was a great pity that we were excluded from even considering a county council with scaled-down powers. I have been proud of Kent's reputation for good policing, good fire services and innovative social services. I fervently hope that the changes that will be forced on us will improve them, but I wonder if they will.

Given the size and homogeneity of the Medway towns, it is difficult to argue that they should not become a unitary

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

authority, and people there are keen that that should be so, except the Gillingham Liberals, who apparently have infuriated the Rochester upon Medway Liberals by stuffing leaflets through their doors condemning them for supporting unitary status.

So vicious has the fraternal dispute become that I gather that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) is to be asked to parachute in and to sort it out, if he can spare the time from sorting out Bosnia. We know that the Liberals say one thing in the south-west and another in the south-east, but to have two Liberal groups saying different things within a mile of each other adds a new piquancy to their inability to get their act together.

I should be glad if my hon. Friend the Minister could reassure us that, whatever the final outcome of the Local Government Commission deliberations, Kent will be able to continue to command European Union resources as part of a Euro-region and will not be jeopardised by a reduction of its present size. We have had a considerable inflow of valuable money from the European Union as we have developed as part of a Euro-region, and I would be deeply sorry if any change in the local government set-up put that very valuable development—a development that is indispensable as we are the home of the British end of the channel tunnel—at risk.

There is yet another dimension to this constitutional upheaval. The hon. Member who is just about to be proclaimed the leader of the Labour party has promised a Scottish Parliament within a year of any Labour election victory. That is a very interesting promise. How will that Parliament be formed? What will it do? What will be its impact on this Parliament? The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) suggested the other night that Stormont provided a precedent, whereby hon. Members from Northern Ireland were allowed to vote on English matters and in Northern Ireland took part in exclusively Northern Ireland debates. Northern Ireland constituencies were quite large, whereas Scottish ones are generally considerably smaller than those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I would find any such arrangement for Scotland wholly unacceptable and I do not believe that I would be the only English Member of Parliament to hold that view. If Scottish Members of Parliament were to sit in a Scottish Parliament to debate Scotland's health, education, social services, roads or any other subject and I could have no vote, I certainly would not accept their voting on England's health, education, roads or similar subjects.

If Scottish Members of Parliament are not to take part in a Scottish Parliament, what will it do and who will sit in it? It does not sound like a particularly useful undertaking and I look forward to hearing the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) explain to the House exactly what this promise, on which so many Scottish hopes have been built, will mean in practice.

I believe that the time has come for Madam Speaker to set up a commission to examine the future of this ancient Parliament and to equip it for the 21st century. We are muddling along in this place. It seems that there is some value in having a change in sitting hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I wonder whether the hon. Member thinks that the Minister who will reply is responsible for all the subjects that he is covering.

Mr. Rowe: I tabled the subject of my debate; I did not choose the Minister to reply to it. I have enormous confidence in my hon. Friend the Minister, whose knowledge of the constitution is extraordinary. I certainly imagine that he will share some of my anxieties about the future of this ancient Parliament, which, unless we address the matter in a coherent, sensible and radical way, will simply become a talking shop with little effect on the Executive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I appreciate that this is an Adjournment debate, but the hon. Gentleman is not being fair to the Minister. I hope that he will bear that in mind.

Mr. Rowe: Of course I accept the rebuke, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that I am entitled to say that part of my unease about this country's constitutional arrangements, whether national or local, stems from the aggrandisement of the Executive at the expense of Parliament or local authorities. We cannot expect the Government themselves to address that. It is up to the House to pay considerable attention to these matters because we were sent here to represent constituents to whom the shape and form of local government is of little concern. Every person who comes to my surgery with a grievance is mistaken about which layer of government is responsible for it.

The Government hope that, as a result of the deliberations of the Local Government Commission, the number of tiers will be reduced and people will get it right. If the Government believe that they are fooling themselves, because people who come to my surgery do not know whether Customs and Excise, the Inland Revenue, the Department of Social Security or housing or roads departments belong to a particular tier of local government.

Instead of looking all the time to the machinery of local or central government, we should increasingly address the definition of the role of government in a world in which money, information, armaments and everything else can move across frontiers at the drop of a hat.

The telegram totally changed the nature of diplomacy. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was the last British ambassador to declare war on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty. After that, information was sent home by telegram for discussion by the Foreign Secretary. The communications revolution, the increase in education and sophistication among the population and the way in which decisions are taken around the world have completely altered the nature of the role and authority of government. The relationships between local and central government or between this Parliament and the European Parliament should be urgently addressed.

1.47 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your attempts to make sure that I answered only to my brief, but perhaps I will take the liberty of being slightly discursive. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) spoke about the European Union and the European Parliament. I spent 10 years in that institution so I can reflect to some degree on its competencies in relation to the House.

It is a mistake to believe that power and responsibility exist in defined chunks, and that an absence of power and responsibility here necessarily adds to them somewhere else. I have never believed in the thesis that giving more power to the European Parliament necessarily means that an equivalent amount of responsibility is removed from this or another national Parliament.

There is a real problem in the European Union over accountability for decisions. It depends on the Council and the areas of competence. I have always believed that the way to address that may lie much more in trying to elaborate some of the party links between Members at Westminster and Members of the European Parliament and to appeal via the party network rather than the parliamentary network. But with the best will in the world, the different working methods of the two establishments make that difficult.

For example, some continental Parliaments do not meet on Mondays. There are group meetings at which members of Government, Members of Parliament and Members of the country's European Parliament and perhaps senior party members discuss policy. That forms the network, the link. It is not a parliamentary link, it is a political link, which appears to be effective. One never knows, there may be things that we can learn from continental practice, in the same way as certain activities in the European Parliament, such as Question Time, have been adopted from the traditional practices effective in the House.

So, if I do not believe that there is a fixed body of competence, which must be divided like a cake between our Parliament and the European Union or its institutions, for the same reason I do not believe that that concept is true in our relationship with local government. I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent in pursuit of the health service or other such areas—I sure that he understands why—but I shall look at the areas for which my Department is competent. The urban development corporations, for example, were established to deliver a particular result: to try to assemble land in areas where there was a tradition of decay and dereliction, to try to do that efficiently and to accelerate some of the set planning procedures. Of course, local representatives sit on those bodies.

In my hon. Friend's county of Kent, on the border with the east Thames corridor, we are not adopting that technique, but we are deliberately working through the local authorities. We have brought them together in those terms, for we are shortly hoping to launch our planning strategy for the east Thames corridor, and we have deliberately sought to use the expertise and the competence of traditional, existing institutions. Up to now, touch wood, it is working very efficiently. I hope that we will manage, despite the particularity of the various councils and their obvious competing interests in attracting investment, to succeed in achieving a strategic concept in that whole area.

My hon. Friend mentioned planning and the appeals. It is important to acknowledge the role of the planning function and especially the local plan. We have a regional planning strategy, which is one of the unsung success stories of planning. People find that strategy very helpful. Again, local authorities play the central role in the conferences which bring that decision-making together and that has laid down the broad strategic thrust for developments. Indeed, the south-east regional guide was published relatively recently. We shall boil it down to a local plan.

If the local authorities settle down and produce their local plan, it enables them to give a clear idea of what sort of development they find acceptable. That gives us runway lights. We never say exactly what will happen, but the plan's purpose is to set a framework—the runway lights —within which decisions can be made so that there is a great certainty among everybody concerned about the development which may or may not take place. The elaboration of the plan gives local government—if it uses it sensibly in the manner intended—significant competence in that area.

I shall turn to the role of local government. If we had been holding this debate 120 or 130 years ago, we would have been talking about the creation of modern local government as a task of getting to grips with the unbridled and uncontrolled urbanisation which was the hallmark of the industrial revolution. We would have been talking about providing basic services such as sewerage, water, lights and effective sanitation. Those tasks brought into being Chamberlain's Birmingham and the municipal authorities in Leeds and Manchester; the great urban areas. The task of the Victorian era was the provision of basic amenities to cope with the vast industrial urban society.

If we then look at the immediate post second world period, we saw the creation of a welfare state in Britain and a significant number of competences, which had been the responsibility of local government, were brought into the national domain, especially the health service. It was a transfer of power, if one wants to put it in those terms, but it was a move to serve a different set of circumstances and conditions. Today, especially in the urban areas, we must tackle the reverse side of the coin to the challenges of the mid-Victorian era. We must deal with the debris of the industrial society. Regeneration tasks have been left in our inner cities, and for those we need a different sort of new local authority.

Therefore, I see a change in definition, but the powers must be relevant to the particular tasks that we wish local authorities to carry out at any time.

I believe that local authorities now have three essential roles. The first role is that of regulator, and there is no point in ignoring it. Local government acts under a statutory responsibility as a regulator in many different areas. Trading standards officers are a county responsibility while environmental health officers are a district responsibility. I have never been clear why those two distinct corps should have a separate constitutional arrangement. However, that is an example of regulatory functions that are carried out by local government. It is clear that that role will remain.

The second role is that of a service commissioner—I use the term deliberately—because local government organises the delivery of a range of services, whether the individual services are delivered directly or through the competitive process. The way in which they are delivered is a matter of detail. The fact is that local government has a statutory responsibility for the delivery of a certain number of services.

Local government's third role is that of a regenerator. I realise that that term is not appropriate to all authorities. It is one that will be more relevant in urban areas than in some rural areas. Local government has a role to work more and more with other agencies, with the private sector, with organisations such as training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce and educational establishments, so as to bring together the resources of the community to tackle specific problems. It is close on the back of the city

[Mr. David Curry]

challenge programme, the single regeneration budget and the inter-regional offices, which are all designed to try to harness local resources and bring them to bear on a particular task. I think that the three functions that I have outlined will be at the heart of local government as it is now developing.

In many respects there has been a significant culture change in local government. We must be careful to ensure that where changes have taken place they can be said to be permanent, but where there has been a sea change, it must be recognised. We look to establishing the role of local government in the light of the changes that may have taken place.

Programmes such as city challenge and working in partnership are established gospels throughout large areas of local government. That may not have been the position five or 10 years ago. Some of the policies that we have pursued, such as competitive tendering and the city challenge process, were introduced during a period of budgetary constraints. However, they have contributed to the change in attitude within local government.

My hon. Friend asked specifically whether any local government reorganisation in Kent would affect its eligibility for European funds. The answer is no. I can give him that assurance without equivocation.

My hon. Friend talked about changes being forced. I wish to make it clear that the changes will not be forced. The Government do not have a secret agenda. We believe that it is legitimate to test the structures of local government against the functions that I have been describing to ascertain which is the most effective mechanism for the delivery of services. If the answer is that unitary councils—one-stop shops—deliver services most effectively and are effective in service delivery, financial terms and identity terms, they will constitute the route that recommends itself. If such councils do not appear to be the obvious formula, if the benefits are not clear, or if the arguments point the other way, there is nothing that states that some preordained plan will determine a particular outcome in any particular area.

I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that when the debate takes place in Kent it is focused on the heart and nature of local government. Let it be a sensible and mature debate on how services are best delivered. Perhaps we can have rather less of the propaganda battle, which in some areas has disfigured debate in the heart of local government.

When the report comes to my Department, we shall examine it in the circumstances that I have outlined. As my hon. Friend knows, the procedure has been set up, but at present the recommendations are with the commission. It will have to test them against opinion in Kent and then make a final recommendation. That may not be the same as the original recommendation. The recommendation will come to us and the Government have options. We can accept it, reject it or send it back for modification. We are not bound by a recommendation that the commission may put forward except in general terms. We must conduct our own investigations and consultations, which will include my hon. Friend and other Members representing Kent constituencies. I believe that they know best what Kent wants and needs. They will be at the heart of our consultation. I give my hon. Friend that assurance. I hope that he will find that I have made a useful contribution to the debate.

Drug Use (Royal Commission)

2 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It is an unexpected pleasure to see a bearded Minister on the Government Front Bench today. At last there is a breakthrough for the fraternity of bearded Members who, under a previous Government, were treated like untouchable parliamentary lepers who were doomed to stay on the Back Benches.

It is a genuine and unexpected pleasure to see the new Minister, the Parliamentary-Under Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) in his place. I hope that he will inspire others. One Minister actually shaved his beard off under the reign of Madam Thatcher in order to achieve a place on the Front Bench. I hope that he will take courage and now regrow it in these new days of liberty and freedom.

I am less enthusiastic about the response that I will receive from the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), who has held that office for rather a long time. The new Minister may carry on his intelligent and searching character from his Select Committee work, but I fear that we may be due for a response from the Minister of State, who has been long in office, which is predictable, based on a history of what has happened in this field over several years and is then followed by a period of self-congratulation for the Government.

Drugs are a massive problem. They have damaged and destroyed the lives of millions of our people, but so many of our decisions in respect of drugs are framed on ignorance and prejudice. Perhaps the simplest way to measure the problem is to consider the number of deaths from drugs.

According to official Government figures, no one has died from an overdose of cannabis. In the past year, 94 people died from taking heroin. Two hundred people died as a result of taking paracetamol, which is probably in every home in the land. Two thousand people died from using other drugs. Twenty-five thousand people died from using alcohol and 110,000 from using tobacco. However, as a nation, we spend £100 million encouraging our children to use tobacco and we arrested 40,000 people last year for using cannabis.

When we consider the history of drugs, it is strange to contemplate how we have reached our present position. In the last century, our grandmothers and their grandmothers could buy any drugs, not just in chemists but in local shops. Queen Victoria was a regular cannabis user. She used it every month of her adult life. Cannabis was used by many of the famous names in poetry and literature. They could buy a range of drugs, including heroin, cocaine and cannabis from their corner shops.

In 1928, we decided to criminalise cannabis and certain other drugs. We did that for an entirely irrational reason. The man in charge of a lunatic asylum in Alexandria, Egypt, claimed that all the inmates took cannabis. He assumed from that that the use of cannabis led to insanity. However, he did not point out that almost the entire population of Alexandria—men, women and children—also used cannabis, but they were not insane.

One argument in favour of banning cannabis which was made in the House a short while ago, and about which I was curious, is that it destroys brain cells. I decided to discover upon what that claim was based. Only one experiment has suggested that cannabis destroys brain cells. In that experiment, monkeys were forced to smoke 63 very intensely strong cannabis cigarettes under such conditions that they drew into their lungs only cannabis smoke and insufficient oxygen. They suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning and that destroyed their brain cells.

Cannabis has been used widely throughout the world. It is claimed that 60 million Americans have used it and that there are 1 million regular users in Britain. I hope that we can have some new thinking about our current laws. Our laws are not only not stopping the increase in the use of drugs, but are actually fuelling that increase. We are repeating the mistakes that have been made in every country in the world.

I challenge the Minister to tell me of any country that has followed our line—that is, cracking down on cannabis and hard drugs—and where that has not led to the certain result of increased use and increased crime. America is the prime example. It had a very strong case against alcohol—one can always make a case on alcohol abuse much more than one can in respect of other drugs. Alcohol is an extremely damaging drug. Understandably, in 1919, it was decided to prohibit it. The result was a doubling of the use of alcohol. Even worse than that, four times as many people died from alcohol abuse, possibly because they were taking too much of it in unhealthy circumstances or because bad alcohol was on the market. Thirteen years later, when the use of alcohol was decriminalised, the situation reverted.

America inherited an empire of criminals who had grown rich in well-organised crime. We are now doing exactly the same in this country with illegal drugs. We know of the increase in crime. At least 40 per cent. of homes in our constituencies are broken into, and people commit petty crime in pursuit of goods to sell for money to fuel their habits or drug addictions. If we carry on like that, we will end up as they have in America. In America in 1962, just 4 per cent. of people between 18 and 25 were cannabis users. After the United States Government spending $8 billion a year, using their army, navy, air force, coastguard and diplomacy in the war on drugs—they call it a war on drugs—more than 70 per cent. of young Americans in that age group regularly use soft drugs. It is counter-productive.

I do not want an increase in cannabis use. I want cannabis to be regarded as boring and uninteresting. At the moment, it is regarded by young people as a challenge—something with which they can kick against other generations. One argument is that decriminalising the use of cannabis will lead more people to use it and will encourage them to go on to hard drugs. I heard one cannabis user answer that argument by saying, "My father has drunk five pints of bitter every Saturday night for the past 40 years and he has never gone on to methylated spirits." We know that groups of people will go on to abuse any drug, but there is a great gulf between those with personality weaknesses who go on to total hard drug abuse.

The great danger now is that with our young people experimenting with drugs—a third of them do, whatever we say and whatever we urge—they enter the world of illegality and mix with the pushers and the people who make money out of drugs. The likelihood is that they will be tempted, either by subterfuge or because they are under the influence of another drug, to go on to hard drugs. If we

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

take them out of that market, there will be a chance that they carry out their experiments and then put the drug aside as something of no interest.

Let us consider countries that have adopted that course. I am sure that the Minister read two reports this year, one by a left-wing think tank and the other by a right-wing think tank. They came from very different perspectives, but they reached the same conclusion—that the only way to cut crime and drug use is by decriminalising soft drugs. The worst figure on drug abuse is from America. In America, 1.5 million children are on amphetamines because they suffer from attention deprivation. It is tragic that people abuse a drug in such a way for no purpose. All drugs are damaging. Some benefit us, but they are all damaging in the long run.

Germany recently decriminalised cannabis for personal use. Italy and Holland have already done so. The head of Interpol strongly urges it. There are many such voices in America. The Health Minister in Portugal is urging decriminalisation. Police, judges and magistrates are urging that course. I am not suggesting that we follow Holland, which has gone from a black market to a white market. I am not suggesting that we should have drugs of any sort freely on sale. Drugs should certainly still be controlled.

If we look at that course, I believe we will see that it is the only one which we can take to undercut the market. The main reason why there has been an increase in drug use is not because drugs are enjoyable or that people are inherently wicked. The engine driving the increase in drug use here and in every corner of the world is profit. One would expect the Government to understand market forces.

If someone has a drug habit, the best way to pay for it is to persuade his pals to take up that drug habit. If someone is an addict of a hard drug, it may cost £500 a week to fund his habit. The only ways in which that can be paid for is by going into crime, prostitution or drug trading. In Bristol, local police said that it required £500 to feed a habit, and a person may have to steal something like £2,000 to £3,000 worth of camcorders and videos. The crime rate goes on rising.

There are examples in places such as Widnes where courageous doctors have taken a different path. In Widnes, the black market in hard drugs was virtually wiped out by treating the addicts as patients, because that is what they are—they are sick. If a drug is prescribed in a clean and hygienic way, the addict can take it without the fear of arrest. The drug will not be taken in sordid surroundings, and the addict does not have to share needles, thus lessening the chance of getting AIDS.

If the drug is taken in reasonable surroundings, there is a better chance of the person's building up self-esteem and going on a course of rehabilitation that may get him off the habit. It is working in Widnes and in other parts of the world. One remarkable example of what happened in that town is that, with the market in hard and soft drugs having collapsed, one of the local chain stores was willing to part with £2,000 to fund a drug conference. The hard-headed reason why it did that was because shop-lifting in the shop served by the patients of a doctor involved in treating addicts dropped to one twelfth of what it had been before.

We are in a society that is riddled with drugs, and we are having terrible problems. I wish to say something in the short period I have remaining about medicinal drugs, because that is another terrible story. One may imagine that there are a huge number of hard drug addicts, but there are 400,000 addicts of medicinal drugs. Those people have gone along in good faith to their doctors for treatment. I do not blame the doctors, but I very much blame the pushers in the drug companies who make money out of those drugs.

We had a terrible period in this country when benzodiazepines were prescribed like smarties to people who found that they developed a life-long addiction. We already prescribe such drugs on the national health service, and we should also look at a drug which causes twice as many deaths as heroin each year—paracetemol. The Minister should look the next time he goes to a chemist or in his medicine cupboard at the warning for that drug. One needs to take very few of them before it is a fatal dose, and that drug occurs in 50 different guises in some very popular drugs.

It is a killer on a massive scale. If 200 people died in an accident in this city, there would be a major inquiry and we would be very worried. But that is the number who die every year from paracetamol, and the total who die from either accidental or deliberate overdoses of prescribed drugs is 2,000 a year.

We must decide whether the drugs that we take are necessary, and that strikes at the core of our relationship with drugs and at the problems in our society. I believe that we must hit at the drug trade by hitting at the drug market. The last thing which is required is the line that the Government have taken. In order to get some spurious transitory popularity, they posture as hard men who will crack down on the drug trade. What they did was to produce a proposal—I believe it is now a law—to multiply the fine for possession of cannabis fivefold. That was denounced not merely by the people who take drugs or people involved in drugs but by the magistrates, the police and everyone. They all said that it was a daft idea.

If anyone were foolish enough to impose such a fine, it would simply mean that the user of the drug had to commit more crime to pay the fine. The police throughout the country virtually do not fine or arrest anyone for possession of cannabis for personal use. That is the line taken by my police authority and many others. The police are turning against the law and not enforcing it. Only in certain areas are people arrested for use of cannabis. The Government increased the fine to make a vacuous political point.

I wish that the Government would look anew at the whole range of this massive problem. I wish that they would look at our relationship with drugs. We are a society which has become deeply dependent on drugs. We expect that there should be an answer for every sorrow that we feel, every bereavement, every pain and every moment of boredom. We reach for the box of pills and expect an answer there. We have forgotten that it is inevitable in the human condition that we suffer pain, boredom and bereavement. All we do by taking drugs is postpone that pain, often at terrible cost.

I urge the Government to take action now to set up a royal commission that can consider drug use in the great detail that is necessary and, in the end, liberate millions of our people from drug dependency.

2.16 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): Let me first pay the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) the compliment of saying that I know that he takes considerable interest in drug issues. It is a pity that he has not got himself better briefed on the facts of the case. Although we may differ in our approach to tackling the drugs problem, he and the rest of the House will agree when I say that drug misuse is one of the most serious problems which face our society. However, I must say, in all honesty, that some of the sentiments that the hon. Gentleman expressed were absolute tosh. I shall come to them in a moment.

The drugs problem has many different facets, each of which has to be tackled in its own way. First, drug misuse is a serious health problem. Addiction can have dangerous physical effects. Drug-taking can, and all too often does, lead to death. We have a responsibility to current and future generations of young people to try to change their attitude to behaviour which can have such devastating physical consequences.

Secondly, drugs are a serious social problem. Beyond the individual's physical pain and misery are the social costs, the destruction of an individual's ability to cope with ordinary life, the destruction of any relationships they might have, the destruction of families, who cannot understand it when one of their members becomes addicted, and the destruction of whole communities and neighbourhoods by drug dealers and their evil trade.

Thirdly, drugs are a crime problem. Any strategy to tackle drug misuse must give priority to reducing the misery that drug-related crime inflicts on us all. We know that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has estimated that drug addiction costs this country £2 billion a year in property crime. That is half the recorded value of all stolen property. Few, if any, experts are convinced by that extraordinary estimate and neither am I.

The calculation is based on premises that do not stand up to close examination. The potential cost of £87,600 per heroin addict per year was based on high black market costs of heroin and high daily doses. Not all heroin addicts consume heroin daily, for a variety of reasons including lack of availability, personal disinclination and being either in treatment or in custody. It was further assumed that the whole of their addiction was financed solely from committing crimes and acquiring goods that were then sold and that the stolen goods were sold at only a third of their value.

Funding for drug addiction comes from many other sources. That formula makes no provision for addicts' legitimate sources of income such as benefits and earnings, or from the proceeds of prostitution, begging or the sale of drugs. Such generalised calculations need to be approached with caution. Nor is there any point in wasting time speculating on the exact relationship of drug-related crime, when our policies are designed to bear down on all crime, including drug abuse, and to ensure that our strategies embrace prevention as well as enforcement activity.

I have said enough to underline the seriousness of the drug problem and the threat that it poses to our society. The very seriousness of the problem has tempted some, including the hon. Member for Newport, West, to suggest that the legalisation or decriminalisation of drugs may be the answer.

Some find the idea of legalisation more attractive when confined to removing the controls on cannabis and other so-called soft drugs. There is still scientific debate about the long-term effects of cannabis misuse. There is evidence that cannabis can give rise to acute and transient mental disturbance and drug-induced psychotic illness. Whatever the longer-term effects might be, in the short term cannabis makes users light-headed and unable to concentrate, and any measures that would increase the availability of cannabis would have serious consequences for the health and safety of the public, particularly if cannabis were used by those working in the transport industry or operating industrial machines.

There is also emerging evidence that a much stronger strain of cannabis known by the street term "skunk" is becoming increasingly available on the illicit market. Even less is known about the long-term effects of that drug, which some estimate is five times more potent.

It is also totally misleading to compare the incidence of cannabis-related health problems with those of alcohol and tobacco. The latter substances are not controlled by law and consequentially are used far more widely. To say that alcohol or tobacco kill many more people than drugs do, and therefore we should legalise drugs, is a cock-eyed way of looking at the problem.

If a scientist came along today and said that he had invented a new product called tobacco or alcohol, would it be legalised? It is impossible to look at the historical development of alcohol and tobacco and reach the conclusion that they should be banned today. That is not a possible or sensible route to take, but it is nonsense to say that, as we now have drugs such as cannabis, which are apparently less evil than the destructive effect of tobacco, we should legalise them to put them on the same statutory basis. Why should we risk adding to the nation's health problems by legalising cannabis?

Any relaxation in current laws could have much wider consequences than is often imagined. There is evidence that misusers of drugs such as heroin or cocaine also misuse a wide variety of drugs, including cannabis. Removing the controls on any drugs in Britain would therefore make it a prime attraction for a wide spectrum of drug takers, and traffickers would be quick to move in to meet the demands on other drugs. The most recent report of the International Narcotics Control Board suggested that international drug traffickers target countries with weak laws and controls.

I had a briefing from experienced officers in a police force who recently visited Jamaica to look at the controls on crack. They said that a reggae song on the local radio in downtown Kingston was urging dealers to go to Britain. The encouragement to come to London was the suggestion that

> "The police don't bang, the courts don't hang and the sentence ain't lang".

The police certainly do not "bang" and our courts do not hang, but we have some very long sentences for drug dealing, and London ought not to be an attractive place for international drug dealers.

International drug dealers will certainly move to the place where they think that they can get away with dealing. If this country signalled that it was going to drop controls on some drugs, for misguided reasons, we would be perceived as a soft touch. That would be disastrous for all drug use.

Mr. Flynn: The reason that we are a soft touch is that dealers can make more profit here because cannabis is illegal. The use of cannabis has dropped in countries where it is legal. For example, in Holland it has dropped from 6 to 2 per cent. When alcohol was decriminalised in America, its use dropped because criminals could not make a profit. Does not the Minister understand that simple point?

Mr. Maclean: I am glad that some members of the Labour party are trying to learn the economics of the market, but the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. If he thinks that simply legalising drugs would somehow lower the price, that we would then have a free market and that criminal activity would cease, that is pie in the sky.

Our drug barons and dealers want to be in control, as we have seen. There would be intense competition among the drug barons and dealers to control the supply and maximise their profits. If the price dropped and more kids were encouraged into drug taking and drug use, it would be an appalling price for society to pay, simply because of some cock-eyed theory that it might be economically interesting to legalise drugs as it might pull the rug out from under the international drug market. No country in the world has come to that conclusion.

When some economists get together at seminars, they find it interesting to speculate on what the effect would be if countries legalised drugs. That would be a terribly dangerous experiment to conduct because millions of our people would become hooked on drugs. Not only that; I am convinced that it would not work.

If we legalised drugs, the drugs dealers and barons would not go away, saying, "That's us out of business. We can get the drugs at any local chemist, so there's no more market." Of course not; they will want to control the market in legalised drugs, and will resort to their usual violence to do so.

Mr. Flynn: What about Holland?

Mr. Maclean: I shall come to Germany and Holland —that was the point at which I thought that the hon. Gentleman was talking tosh. He suggested that everyone in the world—all academics, Governments, scientists, police and magistrates—thought that legalisation was a good idea. That is absolute nonsense. One has, of course, heard of some scientists somewhere—no doubt practising for a PhD—who have produced such theories, but I challenge the hon. Gentleman to name any Government in the western world, or any police force in this country, who believe that legalising drugs would help in the fight against drugs—either on the enforcement side or by persuading kids to come off drugs.

A recent meeting of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs adopted a resolution that urged Governments not to derogate from full implementation of the international drug control treaties. As a party to the 1961 convention, the United Kingdom is required to adopt measures to prevent the misuse of, and illicit traffic in, controlled drugs. We would therefore be in breach of the convention if we took unilateral measures to legalise controlled drugs. Even delegates meeting at the United Nations—whom I suspect of having trendy opinions at times—concluded that it would be suicidal to drop controls against drugs and that, among other reasons, is good enough for me.

The hon. Gentleman pointed with approval to the approach that the Dutch and Germans have adopted towards the possession of cannabis. Everything is not always as it seems with his sweeping generalisations. The Dutch Minister of Justice announced at the United Nations in October that his country's so-called coffee-shop policy, whereby cannabis dealing and use are tolerated at certain outlets, is to be reviewed because of a sharp increase in the availability of the drug.

In Germany, the ruling by the constitutional court that possession of small quantities of cannabis for personal use should not, in certain circumstances, be prosecuted attracted some notice. I fear, however, that the hon. Gentleman would be misleading himself and others if he suggested that that amounted to a significant move in the direction of legalisation. The Federal Government have made it clear that the ruling contains nothing new, while the Health Minister described it as "hopelessly wrongly interpreted". The Federal Government have also stressed that the existing law enables prosecuting authorities in the courts not to impose a sentence in minor cases of possession for occasional personal use when there is no danger to third parties, but possession of cannabis remains illegal.

The members of the European Community are united in the fight against drug misuse. At the Corfu European Council last month, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

2.30 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Minister who has to reply to this debate. I had no idea that he was in Hong Kong when I applied for it. I understand that he landed at 5 o'clock this morning, only to find that he had to answer this debate. Still, I know that he shares many of our concerns about Burma, and I am sure that he will rise to the occasion.

I thought it vital, before we finished for the summer, that the House paid its respects to the courage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who has now completed five years under house arrest in Rangoon and who, for many Burmese all over the world and in Burma, has kept alive the hope of a return to democratic government in Burma.

I also record the fact that 2,064 Members of Parliament from 32 countries, including 200 of our colleagues here, signed a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pointing out to him that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory in May 1990, winning 392 of 485 seats—despite the fact that she was by then under house arrest. Since then, about 1,550 opponents of the Government, many of them elected to Parliament in that election, have been arrested or put in prison. The human rights abuses by the Burmese regime have been well catalogued.

The fact that several colleagues are present in the Chamber for this Adjournment debate is a tribute to their concern. Our letter to Boutros Boutros-Ghali was designed to reiterate what we have always understood to be the position of the international community; it called for the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, with guarantees of their complete freedom and swift implementation of a transition to civilian rule, as mandated by the election of May 1990.

On 20 July five years ago, 11 lorries full of troops came to San Suu Kyi's house. The troops cut off the telephones and excluded her from all contact with any but her immediate family. Some comparison can be made with the suffering of Nelson Mandela and his immense contribution to change in South Africa while being imprisoned for so long. Mandela at least went through some form of legal process—however much we might disagree with it—before being sent to Robbin Island; whereas San Suu Kyi has never stood trial or been given any justification by the illegal regime for the fact that she has been detained.

We know from her conversation with Congressman Richardson—the only person from the western world who has had a chance to see her in the past five years—that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains in touch with events in Burma and the world, and that she is still ready, in the same spirit of peace and tranquillity as she has shown ever since becoming involved in Burmese politics, to discuss the way forward.

The regime has, step by step, extended its original powers and sought, with the passage of time, to claim legitimacy, despite the overwhelming rejection of the people of Burma. San Suu Kyi still reaches out towards it to find a way in which to allay its fears and to negotiate and discuss the way forward for the Burmese people, who fear, of all things, the abuse of all normal standards of human rights.

I received a letter from Mr. Sein Win, the Prime Minister of the national coalition Government of the Union of Burma, who asked me to express to the House, on behalf of the Burmese people, their gratitude

"to you and to other members of the House of Commons. Without such well-meaning concern about the human rights situation in Burma by United Kingdom and the others in the international community, the people of Burma would long have lost their hopes to be free and democratic and the brute force of the SLORC would have prevailed over justice."

Many people in all parts of the world feel concern about the lack of progress towards a solution.

I wanted to ask my right hon. Friend the Minister whether the Government remain resolute in their original policy. In some circles, there is concern that the promotion of British week for the second year in Rangoon could give the impression that the time that has elapsed since the election has dulled the edge of our concerns. We know how difficult it is to apply direct pressure on the regime. We know how it is cushioned within the Association of South-East Asian Nations community from the direct concerns that many of us feel.

Will my right hon. Friend give an impression of how we feel about dealing with our Asian and, in particular, our Commonwealth colleagues who are members of ASEAN in terms of constructive engagement with the regime? From the comments of previous Ministers who attended ASEAN meetings, I know how strongly they presented our views. We know that Mr. Baker, the previous US Secretary of State put forward the United States view in a forthright manner at the ASEAN meeting that he attended. This coming week, however, the ASEAN meeting has invited the illegal Burmese regime to attend its opening dinner and closing ceremony.

Constructive engagement can work, but many of us are concerned that it seeks to give authenticity to the illegal State Law and Order Restoration Council regime before the convention succeeds. We are concerned that we may give the impression that, by allowing time to elapse, the regime will accepted by the ASEAN community and more widely. We deeply believe that that would be contrary to natural justice and to the way in which elected colleagues to Parliament should be treated.

I ask my right hon. Friend whether the resolve of the Government, unlike that of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, is weakening. Many of us believe that we should not accept dual standards of human rights. There is no such thing as oriental human rights and human rights for the rest. There is one standard of human rights which should be accepted under the United Nations mandate.

We do not believe that one should accept dual standards of democratic rights. Many of us believe that the 1990 elections were organised in such a way that it was amazing that the military regime were overwhelmingly rejected. Having gone through that process and having had international observers at the last minute to examine it, it is an abomination in terms of democratic systems to reject the result and to hold Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in captivity for this considerable period.

I point out to my right hon. Friend the Minister that trade is not all. Under the system in Burma, the military are involved in many companies and organisations, making it almost impossible to trade without indirectly supporting the illegal military regime.

Concern has been expressed about the status of refugees in Thailand. The various tribes—the Keren, the Mons, the Chins, the Shan—are under pressure to negotiate with SLORC an end to the civil war. We know that Thailand is

[Mr. Jim Lester]

exerting pressure on them to enter negotiations. We are concerned that the status of the refugee, which is absolute in United Nations rules, is being threatened. People can be returned to Burma to face not necessarily trial but being convicted and imprisoned simply for being out of the country.

The processes of the convention should require comment from those outside. The processes have dragged on for a considerable time. Many of the original people called to see whether the convention was an acceptable way of enshrining the military in the future Government of Burma have not attended since because they recognise that it is designed to produce only one result. A convention cannot be designed to produce only one result when a population of 48 million people are seeking only a decent Government. Without Aung San Suu Kyi, whose captivity I began with, remaining there, at great personal cost to herself and her family, the flame of democracy will dim.

I believe that, ultimately, good always triumphs over evil and that Aung San Suu Kyi's time is still to come. I shall finish by quoting her own words:

"It is man's vision of civilised humanity which leads him to dare and suffer to build societies free from want and fear. Concepts such as truth, justice and compassion cannot be dismissed as trite when these are often the only bulwarks which stand against ruthless power."

2.42 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I thank the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), on behalf of myself and my constituents, some of whom are committed members of the Burma action group, for raising the plight of Madam Aung San Suu Kyi in the Chamber. I know that they will be deeply grateful.

As the hon. Member for Broxtowe said, Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday began her fifth illegal year of house arrest —the fifth illegal year because SLORC has changed the existing law and extended the legal period that someone can be kept without charge or trial under house arrest.

Perhaps more important, Aung San Suu Kyi has highlighted the continuing failure of SLORC to meet even the most basic requirements of the international community's definition of what constitutes human rights. Recent newspaper reports have stated that small children are being dragooned and forced to walk ahead of troops to detonate land mines on the road. That is just one example of what the regime is doing in Burma.

Once again, I heartily endorse everything that the hon. Member for Broxtowe said and thank him on behalf of myself and my constituents.

2.43 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): With the leave of the House, I should like to add a few comments, aware fully that my right hon. Friend the Minister is ready to answer the debate.

Just over a year ago, I initiated an Adjournment debate on the same subject. This debate has served as a timely reminder that I was then on my feet, asking my right hon. Friend the Minister why the international community should tolerate such an abuse of civil rights.

Aung San Suu Kyi's only crime is to have been elected. Before she could take up her position, she was incarcerated. When I first spoke about this issue, she had been incarcerated for four years, but she has now been under house arrest for five years. That is utterly intolerable, not simply because I presume to believe that she would be an excellent leader of her country—none of us has any idea about that and the matter is academic—but because she has a right to demonstrate whether she would be just that.

It is all too easy for hon. Members to take for granted the fact that we can speak about many subjects without thinking what it would be like to have restrictions placed on us that would prevent us from airing the views that our constituents wish us to air on their behalf. On this ghastly anniversary, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to do all that is possible, although there is not a great amount that he can do, to persuade the other ASEAN countries not to embark on some form of slow recognition of the ghastly regime in Burma.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council, the aptly-named SLORC, an emotive terminology, should be outlawed and ultimately forced, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) have said, to come to terms with the reality that an elected person waits to take up her position and that she should be allowed to do so as soon as possible.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) for initiating the debate. I welcome the remarks by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith). They and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who is in his place, have shown their concern for a long time about Burma and the plight of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe said, it is certainly timely for the House to focus its attention on the plight of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel peace laureate and daughter of the architect of Burmese independence. As my hon. Friend said, yesterday was the fifth anniversary of her detention under house arrest on 20 July 1989 by the ruling military regime in Burma, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, SLORC.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's continued detention is but one deplorable example of the arbitrary and brutal nature of SLORC, which assumed power in September 1988 after bloodily crushing pro-democracy demonstrations. Although it claimed initially to be an interim authority, and organised fair and free democratic elections in May 1990, it has steadfastly refused to accept the result of these elections, which gave a substantial majority—nearly 60 per cent. of the vote, and over 80 per cent. of the seats—to the party of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Thanks largely to the tireless efforts of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself, as well as her many supporters in the United Kingdom, who were mentioned by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, the world has not been allowed to forget the fate of the Burmese peoples. Their struggle for freedom, and SLORC's appalling human rights record, remain major issues of international concern, attracting public and parliamentary interest worldwide.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's own efforts were acknowledged in 1990, when she was awarded the Sakharov prize, followed one year later by the Nobel peace

prize, for her non-violent efforts in support of democracy and human rights. The award of the Nobel peace prize was a particularly fitting tribute to her commitment to the cause of democracy and civil liberties in Burma. It also served as a reminder to SLORC that the world community would neither forget nor ignore the continuing struggle by the Burmese people for their full human rights.

The citation for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's prize from the Nobel Committee described her contribution as one of the most remarkable examples of civilian courage in Asia in recent decades. She has become an important symbol of the struggle against repression and the desire of the Burmese people for a peaceful transition from a military straitjacket to a democratic system. The majority of the Burmese people continue to regard her as the embodiment of their desire for peace, democracy and freedom.

We remain acutely concerned about Daw Aung San Sui Kyi's situation. We have called repeatedly on the SLORC, in concert with our European Union partners and with other like-minded Governments throughout the world, to commence dialogue with the Burmese opposition to agree to the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Sui Kyi and to allow her to remain freely in Burma in accordance with her wishes. That the SLORC continue to ignore all international calls for her release, including those by the United Nations Secretary-General, is quite unacceptable.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was originally detained under the provisions of the 1975 state protection law, as amended in 1991, which states that the maximum period of detention for a person held under that law is five years. But the most recent SLORC interpretation seeks to extend the term, in practice, to six years.

To mark the fifth anniversary of her detention, the European Union issued the following text at the recent session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission in New York:

"The European Union and the acceding countries Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway view with great concern the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, who has been detained under house arrest in Myanmar since 1989, in flagrant contradiction of all principles of justice. July 20, 1994 marks the fifth anniversary of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's detention. It is unacceptable that there is still no sign of her release.

On the occasion of the anniversary of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's detention, the European Union and the acceding countries Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden call upon the State Law and Order Restoration Council immediately to start serious and meaningful discussions with the representatives of the democratic forces of Myanmar. In the views of the European Union and the acceding countries, Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would open the way for national reconciliation which would, in turn, enable the SLORC to lift the restrictions imposed on her and allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in the political process in Myanmar."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is, of course, only one of the many victims of the ruling regime's denial of human rights in Burma. Students, monks and several other members of Burma's opposition movement have all fallen victim to the SLORC's policies. The United Nations special rapporteur on Burma, Professor Yokota of Japan, reported to the United Nations general assembly that SLORC had arrested and tortured many people who had voiced political dissent. He also expressed concern at the numerous reports of disappearances and extra judicial executions. Other human rights violations in Burma include the forced conscription of porters for use in front-line areas and abuses of civilian non-combatants in the war zones. Freedom of expression remains almost non-existent, with all media being subject to heavy and frequently arbitrary censorship.

As the situation has deteriorated, the United Kingdom, with our European Union partners, has taken a leading role at the United Nations general assembly and at the Commission on Human Rights, to gain consensus support for tough resolutions calling for the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political leaders and in denouncing the human rights violations reported by Professor Yokota.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): My hon. Friend will be aware that among the other political leaders to whom he refers are 37 Members of Parliament. He will be aware also of the visit that I made to Rangoon last month on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to press the case for their release as well as that of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

I wish to add my voice to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). Will my hon. Friend the Minister take the opportunity to assure hon. Members that Her Majesty's Government will give every possible support to visits by parliamentarians to contact those who have been imprisoned in Burma? I think that that would help the process of bringing those in prison some hope and comfort. It would also apply moral pressure for the future.

Mr. Goodlad: I pay tribute to what my hon. Friend did during his recent visit to Burma, in expressing his concern and that of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, along with that of other colleagues, for the detained parliamentarians in Burma. The answer to his question about support for other colleagues following in his footsteps is strongly in the affirmative.

Even in the face of the international concern that I have described, the regime continues its efforts to circumvent the clear expression of the will of the Burmese people. Since 9 January 1993, a national convention has been taking place in Rangoon to draw up a new constitution. We believe that Burma needs a new constitution that incorporates the changes in the political and economic system that the Burmese people have called for since the demonstrations in 1988. It must also provide safeguards for the rights of people belonging to the ethnic minorities, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe has referred.

However, one of the guidelines, to which the convention has been told that it must adhere, requires the constitution to enshrine a leading role for the military in Burma's politics. According to the rules of the convention, delegates are forbidden to question this, which makes a mockery of the entire process.

My hon. Friend asked about European Union policy on Burma. I think that he is well aware that our official relations with the SLORC have been virtually non-existent since it assumed power. We suspended all EU and national non-humanitarian official aid at that time and, in 1991, imposed an arms embargo in response to SLORC's refusal to honour the results of the 1990 elections. We severed all remaining defence links a year later. We have maintained pressure on SLORC to improve its human rights record, to respect the results of the 1990 elections and to promote political and economic reform.

A recent review of EU policy confirmed that existing pressure should be maintained, but we have also agreed with EU partners that we should be more active in ensuring

[Mr. Goodlad]

that SLORC understands that the resumption of normal relations between the EU and Burma is dependent on improvements in Burma's human rights performance and progress towards political liberalisation and national reconciliation. We shall be using SLORC's attendance at the ASEAN meeting next week to ensure that it understands our concerns. The presidency will explain our position to the SLORC Foreign Minister in the margins of the meetings of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

As for the refugees in Thailand, we have insisted—we will continue to do so—that SLORC should treat ethnic minorities in the same way as the rest of the population. We have said that it should apply human rights equally to them.

Although we are talking of the first meeting between the EU and a member of the ruling military regime since it seized power, it should not be seen as a departure from our existing policy on dealings with SLORC. We have consistently refused to accept the regime as the legitimate representatives of the Burmese peoples. We also continue to believe that it is the duty of the international community to persist in their efforts to persuade SLORC to bring about the transfer of power to the civilian Government elected by the people in 1990. We hope that the increasing dialogue between SLORC and neighbouring Asian countries, as well as western nations, will contribute to that pressure. I concur whole-heartedly with what my hon. Friend said about the universality of human rights.

My hon. Friend mentioned trade links. Trade between Britain and Burma is negligible but increasing. United Kingdom exports for 1993 stood at £19 million and imports were £9 million. There has been an increased interest in the Burmese market. We ensure that British firms are aware of the opportunities in Burma and our policy towards SLORC, but, in line with our European partners, we offer no financial support under ECGD or aid and trade provision.

The British week was consistent with our policy on Burma. There is no obstacle to British companies exploring business opportunities. That is not covered by the European Union embargo on arms sales. That does not derogate from or dull our concern over SLORC.

The continued interest shown in the House reflects the genuine wish of people in Britain to see democracy, freedom and full respect for human rights restored in Burma. We will help to make every possible effort to bring that about. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi once said:

"I'm committed to democracy. Until we get there I go on. Let's hope it won't take a lifetime."

We certainly share that hope, but, for as long as it takes, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will have the support of the Government and, I believe, of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock till Monday 17 October, pursuant to Resolution [20 July].

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans his Department has to place some of the legal work it currently performs out to competitive tendering; and in what areas.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has no plans at present to place the legal work which it currently performs out to competitive tendering.

Welsh Language

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to make an announcement on the provision of grants of probate in a bilingual format in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The necessary changes to the Non-Contentious Probate Rules 1987, which will allow bilingual forms, will be made before the end of this year.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to be able to reply to the letter of 21 June from the hon. Member for South Hams and the letter from Brooke Blain Russell and Quinn, reference LB/DH/COAT40011, concerning the case of Mrs. Coates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's letter was received in the Parliamentary Secretary's office on 23 June. A reply will be sent to the hon. Member on or before 21 July.

Finance

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *393*, what plans he has to order *(a)* increases in the fees for civil business and *(b)* cuts in his Department's spending to make up for the £52 million shortfall in predicted income from civil business for the current financial year;

(2) what is the total sum that he is seeking to recover from individual circuits in the current financial year;

(3) how much, by way of running costs, he is seeking to recover from each individual circuit in the current financial year;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *393*, what effect the £52 million shortfall in projected income from civil business in the current financial year will have on *(a)* the circuit court building programme, *(b)* the magistrates courts building programme, *(c)* the number of hours sat by recorders and assistant recorders and *(d)* the number and the length of time for which courtrooms are not in use.

Mr. John M. Taylor: We plan to meet the forecast shortfall by a combination of fee increases and expenditure cuts. A package of county court fee increases, worth an estimated £11 million this year, is in hand. We are monitoring changes in income and expenditure closely, and drawing up detailed plans to cover the remaining gap. It is too early to say what the extent of the expenditure cuts will be, where they will fall, or what the effects of them will be.

Divorce Law

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to publish a White Paper on divorce law reform.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No decisions have been made about the proposals in the consultation paper. It is therefore too early to make plans for publication of a White Paper.

PRIME MINISTER

Electricity and Water Companies

Mr Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of ministerial exhortation on the pay and other benefits of directors of electricity and water companies in 1994.

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear on many occasions that directors should follow the lead that the Government have set for pay in the public sector.

However, remuneration of directors is a matter for the judgment of companies and their shareholders, within the framework of established company law, and reflecting affordability and individual and corporate performance.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Chingford of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 674, which are the other countries involved in nuclear proliferation to which he referred in his answer.

The Prime Minist: Both Iraq and North Korea are countries of nuclear proliferation concern. Both states have breached their obligations under the International Atomic Energy Authority full scope safeguards agreements. We are also concerned by reports that Iran may be seeking to develop nuclear weapons, and we continue to emphasise the importance we attach to all states party abiding by their obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We also take very seriously reports that India, Israel and Pakistan may possess nuclear weapons. We urge these countries to allay suspicions about their nuclear programmes by acceding to the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states.

G7 Summit

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost to the Exchequer of the G7 summit in Naples.

The Prime Minister: It is not possible to give the cost of this meeting at present. A figure will, however, be available in due course.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *376*, if he will set out the reasons why he will not make it his policy that all Government Departments provide substantive replies to questions rather than referring them to the Library.

The Prime Minister: It has long been the practice that right hon. and hon. Members should be directed to the original source of information which is detailed or long.

Gordon McNally

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has held with Gordon McNally relating to Government procurement.

The Prime Minister: None.

TREASURY

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Departments have been carried out in the last three years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury, Customs and Excise, Inland Revenue, Central Statistical Office and the Royal Mint have conducted separate staff attitude surveys in the last three years; copies of the summaries of the findings have been placed in the Library.

Tourism

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many visits to the United Kingdom were made by foreign tourists, and how many tourism trips abroad were made by United Kingdom residents, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: Information on this topic is published each month in "CSO First Release" titled "Overseas Travel and Tourism".

Manufacturing

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Nelson: The information is available from the CSO database, which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

Personal Investment

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses have applied to register with the Personal Investment Authority; and whether individual registration will be permitted.

Mr. Nelson: As at 18 July the Personal Investment Authority has received 3,666 applications for membership. The PIA has announced that it will maintain a register of member firms, appointed representatives of member firms and individuals appointed by member firms as financial advisers or company representatives. The PIA is considering whether it should enter into a direct contractual relationship with relevant individuals working for member firms.

Home Income Schemes

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Securities and Investments Board concerning restitution proceedings under section 61 of the Financial Services Act 1986 to obtain compensation for investors who suffered from unsuitable advice on home income schemes.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many times the former right hon. Member for Blaby, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, informed Parliament and its Committees that he was shadowing the deutschmark; and on what dates.

Mr. Nelson: While sterling has not been participating in formal exchange rate systems it has been the practice of successive Governments not to make public any targets for sterling's exchange rate.

Financial Services

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Securities and Investments Board and the Personal Investment Authority concerning the impact of regulatory costs on the competitive edge of retail financial services and on the creation, continuity and expansion of small firms which offer independent financial advice.

Mr. Nelson: In order to give the Securities and Investments Board leave to recognise the Personal Investment Authority as a self-regulatory organisation, the Financial Services Act required the Treasury to consider whether the PIA's rules, regulations, statements of principle and codes of practice had, or were intended or likely to have, the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition to any significant extent. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 22 June at columns *208-9* on that point.

In addition, the Securities and Investments Board is required by the Act to have satisfactory arrangements for taking account of the cost of complying with statements of principle, rules regulations and codes of practice which it proposes to make. The review of the role and functions of the board, "Making the Two Tier System Work", published in May 1993, extends this commitment to oversight of the cost effectiveness of the whole system of financial regulation under the Act. SIB intends shortly to set up a cost of compliance unit.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor meets the chairman of SIB from time to time to discuss these and other matters. I have no hesitation in confirming the Government's appreciation of the value of independent financial advice.

Debt Relief

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what commitments were made at the Naples economic summit of 8 to 10 July on the sale of part of the International Monetary Fund's gold reserves to assist debt relief for developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Decisions on the sale of the IMF's gold reserves require an 85 per cent. majority of the board of governors of the IMF. No commitments were therefore made at the Naples G7 economic summit.

The G7 did agree to explore ways of mobilising more effectively the existing resources of the International Financial Institutions to respond to, among others, the needs of the poorest most indebted countries. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in his statement to the House on the Naples summit, sales of IMF gold could be one way of helping such countries.

Travel to Work Expenses

Mr. Denis MacShane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider *(a)* taxing free employee car parking or *(b)* granting tax relief to users of public transport travelling to work.

Mr. Dorrell: I have noted the hon. Gentleman's suggestions.

Financial Advisers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the comparative fee scales chargeable for independent financial advisers as required by FIMBRA, IMRO, SIB and PIA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: For a typical firm of independent financial advisers which has two registered individuals, a gross income of £75,000 does not act as a fund manager and does not handle clients' money or investments, the figures would be as in the table.

	£
FIMBRA[1]	1,260
IMRO[2]	2,633
SIB[2]	3,025

[1] 1994-95 figures.
[2] 1993-94 figures.

The large majority of independent financial advisers are currently regulated by FIMBRA. The PIA has yet to settle its fees for 1994-95. Existing fee structures will be retained for that year. The PIA proposes to increase aggregate fees by 18 per cent. compared with the fees that would otherwise have been incurred by members in 1994-95.

Public Transport (Tax Relief)

Mr. Denis MacShane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce tax relief on the purchase of new public transport vehicles.

Mr. Dorrell: Expenditure on the purchase of new public transport vehicles is already entitled to tax writing down allowances of 25 per cent. per annum on a reducing balance basis. This allows almost 70 per cent. of the cost to be written off over the first three to four years of the vehicle's life.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's overall economic objective is to promote sustained economic growth, by establishing a stable microeconomic environment. Small businesses stand to benefit from such conditions.

Particular Budget measures aimed at helping small businesses to become established and grow include:

- implementing a simpler and more efficient regime for assessing personal tax;
- proposals for aligning income tax and national insurance contributions;
- simplifying the audit requirement for most small companies;
- relief on capital gains where proceeds are reinvested in qualifying unquoted trading companies;
- extension of CGT retirement relief;
- reduction in employers' NICS;
- protection from costs of changes to statutory sick pay;
- halving of real increases in business rates for businesses in transition to higher rates;
- increasing the limits for small companies rate of corporation tax by 20 per cent;
- consultation on a new type of investment, a venture capital trust, which will channel savings specifically into unquoted trading companies;
- the introduction of a new scheme to replace the business expansion scheme, the enterprise investment scheme, to encourage direct equity investment in unquoted trading companies.

In the recent competitiveness White Paper, the Government also announced a number of measures to combat late payment, a problem which has particularly affected small businesses in recent years.

The Chancellor is also currently conducting, with the help of the Financial Secretary and myself, an examination of external finance to business to identify whether there are any market imperfections which may distort the flows of finance, and if there are, to consider how present arrangements can be improved.

European Union

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government now intend to introduce legislation to implement the own resources decision agreed at the Edinburgh summit of December 1992 and announced in the last Gracious Speech.

Sir John Cope: I am not able to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 4 May at column *242*.

Finance Bill

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to publish the next Finance Bill before the Christmas recess.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government will publish the next Finance Bill as soon as possible after the Budget, but I cannot give a firm date at this stage.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the public sector borrowing requirement was accounted for by payments of unemployment benefit and redundancy payments in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo: The table sets out the latest data for payments of unemployment benefit and the PSBR in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94. No data are collected centrally on public sector redundancy payments.

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Payments of unemployment benefit £ million	1,642	1,801	1,786
Public sector borrowing requirement	13,879	36,578	45,937

It is not meaningful to express total general Government expenditure or any of its components as a percentage of the PSBR since the PSBR is the difference between expenditure and receipts.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Channel 4 (Exhibition)

Sir David Knox: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Twelve Years of Channel 4" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 14 November to Friday 18 November.

Child Care

Mrs. Roche: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will publish the results of the survey into child care in the parliamentary estate.

Mr. Beith: Copies of the report of the survey of potential demand for child care facilities are now available from the Vote Office. The report was prepared by RSL in February 1994 in consultation with the Department of Finance and Administration and the Administration Committee. The House of Commons Commission has agreed that it should be made available to assist the House in considering a child care policy.

Gracious Speech

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those occasions since 1979 when a Bill that has been announced in the Gracious Speech has not subsequently been introduced in that Session.

Mr. Newton: The Queen's Speeches at the beginning of the 1979-80 and 1980-81 Sessions included references to Bills which were not subsequently introduced in the same Session.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Conservative Party Funds

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his oral answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column 144, whether the Conservative party will return the donation received from the Palumbo family trust if it proves to have been misappropriated.

Mr. Newton: This is not a matter for the Government.

WALES

Welsh Economic Council

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the current membership of the Welsh Economic Council together with the cost associated with servicing it and remuneration or expenses paid to its members in respect of their duties.

Mr. Redwood: Current members of the Welsh Economic Council are:

Professor John Andrews, Ms Noreen Bray, Professor Tim Congdon, Mr. Richard Cuthbertson, Mr. Nigel Guy, Mr. Carl Hadley, OBE, Mr. David Jenkins, MBE, Mr. Tony Lewis, Councillor John Pembridge, Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe, Mr. John Troth, OBE and Councillor Tom Williams.

Membership carries no remuneration but there are arrangements for reimbursement of travelling expenses and any necessary subsistence or additional child care costs incurred, in line with Welsh Office rates. To date, a total of £138·60 has been paid in expenses to members. Other people are invited to attend individual meetings to bring their expertise to bear on the chosen subject.

The cost associated with servicing the council, including members' expenses, will be met from within a budget of £9,921 for the current financial year.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which management consultants have been employed by his Department to assist in the assessment of applications for trust status; how much each was paid; and how many assessments they undertook, in each wave.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 1 November 1993 at column *51*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

"Good government" Initiative

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he can report with the "Good government" initiative.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Good government is crucial to development. This is now very widely accepted by aid recipient countries.

42. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas aid budget goes to east African countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Twelve per cent. of bilateral aid to developing countries went to east African countries in 1992-93.

Gaza and Jericho

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the assistance being given by Britain and the European Union to support the Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In January 1994 my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced our intention to give, over the three years 1994-95 to 1996-97, £70 million in aid for the Palestinians and in support of the peace process. Most of it will be channelled through the programmes of the European Community, but a significant proportion, currently £6 million a year, will go through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The rest will be bilateral technical cooperation.

On 8 July my right hon. Friend announced a further £5 million of bilateral assistance for the new Palestinian administration this year. This is made up of £3 million for immediate running costs and £2 million for increased technical assistance.

Part of these funds will go to the Palestinian police force to help in the maintenance of law and order. Priorities for British assistance are good government—for example, legal infrastructure, elections and the police, finance and private enterprise, health and water.

During the period 1994-98, the EC will provide an assistance package worth 500 mecu or £388 million, half of which will be grant and half loans through the European Investment Bank. Over 50 mecu has been approved this year, including 10 mecu for housing, 10 mecu for education, 10 mecu for police, 10 mecu for the rehabilitation of detainees, 8 mecu for credit institutions, 5 mecu for technical assistance, 1·5 mecu for statistical support and 1·5 mecu to support the elections. The EC is also contributing the UNRWA over 30 mecu or £23·5 million per annum for the period 1993-94. In April EU Foreign Ministers adopted a joint action plan in support of the middle east peace process, focusing on support for the police, elections and election monitoring and an international presence in the occupied territories.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what administrative impediments there are in the way of the giving of assistance by Britain and the European Union to the Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho; and how they are being resolved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some key appointments still remain to be made by the new Administration, which itself lacks administrative experience. Assistance with institution-building is a priority for the international community. In particular, the World bank has helped the Palestinians draw up a priority investment programme, and is providing technical assistance and feasibility studies through a special fund to which Britain contributed $2 million. The World bank is also administering a separate fund set up as a channel for bilateral contributions to the running costs of the Palestinian central administration. Discussions are taking place among donors aimed at the rapid establishment of a similar mechanism for funding police running costs.

Both Britain and the EC are providing direct help in the development of administrative capacity and are contributing towards the Palestinians' immediate budgetary needs.

Rwanda

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is currently being given to Rwanda by *(a)* the European Union and *(b)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the start of the crisis the British Government have committed over £11 million bilaterally in emergency aid to Rwandans, both inside Rwanda and as refugees in neighbouring countries. The European Union has committed over £34 million. Details of the substantial amounts provided bilaterally by other member states are not immediately available.

World Summit for Children

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the 1994 United Nations Children's Fund report, "The Progress of Nations"; and to what extent he considers the report to be an accurate assessment of the objectives set out in the 1990 summit for the world's children and the progress made in achieving those objectives.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: "The Progress of Nations" is an interesting and encouraging account of real achievements by developing countries. It also highlights, however, those areas, such as the elimination of neonatal tetanus and improvements in child rights, where more work remains to be done.

An assessment of progress towards achievement of the summit's goals is expected to be made in the mid-decade review next year.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has *(a)* to increase contributions to UNICEF and *(b)* to press for a greater proportion of UNICEF's expenditure to be spent on meeting the objectives set out in the 1990 summit for the world's children.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our core contribution to UNICEF in 1994-95 will be £8·5 million. In addition, we will continue to consider each UNICEF appeal for supplementary and other funding on its merits.

A mid-decade review of progress on the world summit for children will be made to the United Nations Secretary-General. Progress on the summit's goals is a matter not simply of asking UNICEF to devote more resources but of ensuring a concerted effort by donors, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and, above all, national Governments, to achieve the goals.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the procedures for monitoring the achieving of the objectives set out at the summit for the world's children in 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agencies of the United Nations take the lead in monitoring performance in respect of the goals established at the 1990 world summit for children. These agencies produce regular reports which measure progress in such areas as child health, basic education and child protection.

Aid (Allocation)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he takes of military spending by recipient countries in deciding the allocation of aid resources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom actively supports the increased emphasis placed by the donor community, including the International Monetary Fund and the World bank, in their relations with developing countries on the implications for economic and social development of an excessive level of military expenditure. We have made it clear that we consider the setting of an appropriate level of military expenditure to be an important part of good government. It is one of the factors we take into account when deciding our allocations of bilateral aid.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for analysing contributions to overseas aid in terms of allocation to *(a)* basic education, *(b)* primary health care, *(c)* safe drinking water, *(d)* adequate sanitation, *(e)* family planning aid and *(f)* fair distribution of resources between different groups.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA has recently introduced a computerised policy information marker system which records both expenditure and future commitments against the seven priority objectives of the aid programme outlined in the ODA's 1994 departmental report. Spending commitments in the areas listed in the question will not be shown separately under the PIMS system but will score against some of ODA's seven objectives, such as human development, including better education and health and children by choice and direct poverty reduction. PIMS data will be drawn upon in the series of biennial monitors' reports which will assess performance, including spending performance, against each of the objectives, and consider what lessons this may have for future strategy and allocation of resources.

HEALTH

Capitation Targets

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a table showing those district health authorities that are *(a)* over and *(b)* under their capitation targets indicating for 1994-95 (i) the percentage by which they diverge from their capitation and (ii) the cash amount that this represents of current budgets.

Mr. Sackville: A table summarising district health authority capitation positions as supplied by regional health authorities to the Department will be placed in the Library.

Maternity Care

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each of the 14 former NHS regions and for special health authorities for each financial year from 1992-93 onwards *(a)* the total number of maternities, *(b)* the total number of birth episodes in the maternity hospital episode system and *(c)* the total number of birth episodes in the maternity hospital episode system which had a maternity tail.

Mr. Sackville: The data are contained in the tables, the latest available being those for the year 1992-93. Maternities occurring in hospitals are shown for calendar year 1992; financial year data are not available.

Table 1
Maternities in hospitals, 1992
Regional health authority of occurrence

	Number
Northern	39,450
Yorkshire	49,051
Trent	57,461
East Anglian	27,572
North West Thames	41,282
North East Thames	59,574
South East Thames	49,738
South West Thames	37,994
Wessex	36,609
Oxford	35,328
South Western	38,720
West Midlands	72,370
Mersey	30,729
North Western	56,890
Special Health Authorities	5,130
ENGLAND	637,898

Source: Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Table 2
Maternity hospital episode statistics, 1992-93
Estimated numbers of birth records and birth records with maternity tails containing data

RHA of treatment	*Birth records*	*Birth records with maternity tails containing data*
Northern	39,168	35,960
Yorkshire	49,768	25,852
Trent	52,652	52,552
East Anglian	27,680	21,308
North West Thames	31,460	25,252
North East Thames	51,736	51,736
South East Thames	49,528	17,084
South West Thames	34,920	34,732
Wessex	36,620	36,620
Oxford	34,624	32,484
South Western	38,556	24,872
West Midlands	57,956	57,956
Mersey	19,264	15,752
North Western	53,900	53,900
Special Health Authorities	5,132	5,132
ENGLAND	582,964	491,192

Source: DH 25 per cent. births file.

Dental Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of active registrations of capitation patients for dental treatment in *(a)* Trafford family health services authority and *(b)* City and East London family health services authority in the age categories (i) nought to two years, (ii) three to five years, (iii) six to nine years, (iv) 10 to 14 years, (v) 15 to 17 years and (vi) under 18 years for the period January to March; and what was the take-up rate for each age group per 100 local population.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table. Figures are available on a quarterly basis. Patients are free to register with a dentist outside the family health services area where they live. The take-up rates

shown in the table therefore reflect registrations with dentists in each family health services area and not registrations of each area's residents. Our recent publications, "Improving NHS Dentistry" and "An Oral Health Strategy for England" aim further to improve children's oral health and address regional variations. Copies of these documents are available in the Library.

Number of capitation patients registered and take-up rate per 100 local population[1] at 31 March 1994
Trafford and City and East London family health services authorities

Age group	Trafford family health services authority: Number registered	Trafford family health services authority: [2]Take-up rate per 100 local population	City and East London family health services authority: Number registered	City and East London family health services authority: [2]Take-up rate per 100 local population
0 to 2	3,284	37	1,980	6
3 to 5	7,107	82	9,059	31
6 to 9	10,620	95	16,343	45
10 to 14	12,550	94	17,224	45
15 to 17	5,873	80	7,854	39
Under 18	39,434	80	52,460	34

Source: Dental Practice Board.

[1] Take-up rate per 100 local population is calculated using Office of Population Censuses and Surveys estimated resident population at mid-1992. The take-up rate per 100 local population is the number of children registered with a dentist in the FHSA area expressed as a percentage of the population. This is *not* a measure of the population of children in an FHSA area registering with a dentist because there is no restriction on patients registered with a dentist outside their FHSA area.

[2] Of the relevant age group.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *318*, what research her Department intends to commission to discover the proportion of the population who visit a dentist every six months.

Dr. Mawhinney: The 1993 General Household Survey included questions about attendance patterns at the dentist.

NHS Staff (Early Retirement)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service staff took early retirement in each of the last three years; and what was the total cost to the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of people taking early retirement age 50 and over, except those retiring because of ill health, in each of the last three years is:

Early retirement

Year	Number
1991-92	3,108
1992-93	4,033
1993-94	6,318

National health service employers meet the full cost of paying these retirement benefits early. The total costs in each of the last three years are:

Early retirement

Year	£
1991-92	19,222,371
1992-93	27,065,579
1993-94	42,522,384

The cost of ill health retirement is not charged to NHS employers. The number of people taking ill health retirement in each of the last three years is:

Year	Number
1991-92	7,387
1992-93	8,381
1993-94	8,613

Property Theft

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the value of NHS property stolen in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The reported losses of property, including cash, due to theft, fraud, arson, neglect of duty or gross carelessness are shown in the table.

The figure relates to regional, district and special health authorities and family health services authorities. Figures for national health service trusts are not collected on a comparable basis.

Reported losses to RHA, DHA and FHSA property

Year	£ thousands
1988-89	2,482
1989-90	2,667
1990-91	3,138
1991-92	4,995
1992-93	2,111

Source: Annual receipts and payments returns of regional, district and special health authorities and family health services authorities.

Community Care

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients discharged from hospital in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March had a community care plan for their continuing health and social care needs agreed with them prior to discharge.

Mr. Bowis: The patients charter states that before a patient is discharged from hospital a decision should be made about any continuing health or social care needed. Local authorities and health authorities should work together to assess and respond to the needs of people who may need long term care and should agree local arrangements for monitoring hospital discharge.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the registration of skin cancers other than melanomas; and what improvements she proposes.

Mr. Sackville: I am advised that there is under-registration of skin cancers other than melanomas. Registration varies widely depending on the registry's access to out-patient records and general practitioners. The steering committee on cancer registration has recommended that the implications of improving registration of these cancers should be examined in a cost-benefit analysis. This is under consideration.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department is doing into malignant skin cancer.

Mr. Sackville: Research is being undertaken by or commissioned by this Department, the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the National Radiological Protection Board. Current and recent research has looked at the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the public in relation to the risks of over-exposure to sun, underlying mechanisms of ultraviolet-induced skin damage and the benefits of screening for skin cancer.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has made to the World Health Organisation about the quality of its work in emergency situations in developing countries.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Afairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), gave him on 13 July at column *636*.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the quality of the work of the World Health Organisation in emergency situations in sub-Saharan Africa; and what proposals she has to improve the quality of her monitoring of the activities of the World Health Organisation in developing countries.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), gave him on 4 July at column *77*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the instructions which are given to national health service trusts for calculating hospital charges to private patients; and what surpluses these are expected to achieve.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 29 June at col *587*. No targets have been set for the amounts to be raised from treating private patients.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the extent to which national health service trusts can undertake private work;

(2) what controls and reporting mechanisms there are within national health service trusts to ensure that the treatment of national health service patients is not adversely affected by the use of staff and resources for private patient treatment.

Mr. Sackville: National health service trusts may make accommodation and services available for private patients providing there is no significant interference with the performance of the trust of its obligations under NHS contracts. This statutory requirement prevents NHS patients from being disadvantaged by private practice within the health service. It is for local management to ensure that these statutory obligations are met.

Mr. Graham Smith

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why Mr. Graham Smith was not recommended for reappointment as chairman of Doncaster health authority; and at what level the decision was taken.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mr. Graham Smith's term of office expired on 31 March 1994. The decision not to offer a further term was made by Ministers, on advice.

Breast Disease

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures the Government are taking to ensure that all patients with breast cancer are treated and cared for by expert and experienced staff with specific skills in the management of breast cancer;

(2) what steps she is taking to define what constitutes a critical mass of patients to be seen and cared for in breast clinics;

(3) what plans she has to ensure that patients suffering from breast cancer are seen only by specialist surgeons experienced in the management and treatment of breast cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The expert advisory group on cancer consultative document entitled "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services", copies of which are available in the Library, recommends that professional bodies should urgently develop guidelines on the level of expertise and support required to manage the commoner cancers including breast cancer. Professional bodies are currently being consulted on the group's recommendations.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the current number of specialist breast care nurses to ensure that all patients have access to their skills and support in the physical and psychological effects of the disease and treatment.

Mr. Sackville: The expert advisory group on cancer's consultative document entitled "A policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services", copies of which are available in the Library, recommends that the benefits of specialised care are available to all cancer patients. It is for individual health authorities to decide what staff to employ in the light of local needs and priorities.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has planned to lessen variations in breast cancer deaths occurring within a single regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The expert advisory group on cancer's consultative document entitled "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services", copies of which are available in the Library, makes a number of proposals to improve cancer care. In particular it recommends that all patients should have access to a uniformly high quality of care wherever they may live to ensure the maximum possible cure rates and best quality of life. Decisions on the group's proposals will be made when the consultation exercise has been completed.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking to expand services to care for the number of patients with breast disease in whom curative treatment is not appropriate and who require continuing care and support.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are continuing to encourage the development of palliative care in all settings to ensure that patients receive sensitive care and relief from pain and other distressing symptoms. Regional health authorities have been asked to ensure that an appropriate level of palliative care services for terminally ill people is commissioned through service contracts.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to provide a confidential, appropriate and comprehensive prosthetic service for patients who have had breast surgery.

Mr. Sackville: The arrangements for the supply of breast prostheses to women who have suffered a mastectomy are through the hospital service. Where they are prescribed through the hospital consultant they are supplied and fitted free. The Department of Health is providing section 64 project funds for a survey, conducted by the charity Breast Cancer Care, into the experience of women fitted with a prosthesis. Their findings will be studied by the Department.

Family Health Services Appeal Unit

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the family health services appeal unit uses the information it receives through identifying practitioners who have persistently been found to be in breach of the terms of service to monitor and improve services.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions of the director of the family health services appeal unit are notified to family health services authorities who are responsible for monitoring and improving family health services in their localities. The director may also inform the relevant professional regulatory body of his decision in a particularly serious case.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time since 1 April 1992 taken by the family health services appeal unit *(a)* from the time of appeal to reach a decision concerning a breach of the terms of service, *(b)* from the time of the receipt of the request to reach a decision concerning waiving of time limits, *(c)* to arrange an appeal hearing from the time of receipt of appeal, when the appeal is made by the complainant, *(d)* to arrange an appeal hearing, from the time of receipt of appeal, when a practitioner has appealed against a withholding and *(e)* to notify the result of an appeal hearing, after the date of the hearing.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what performance standards the family health services appeal unit has.

Dr. Mawhinney: Officials are discussing the development of performance standards with the new director of the unit.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the family health services appeal unit's most recent annual report was made available to the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: In March 1994.

National Skin Bank

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to set up a national skin bank; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have recently asked the United Kingdom Transplant Support Services Authority to commission a review of the current arrangements for the retrieval, storage and use of tissue, including skin, in the United Kingdom. Once the findings are complete we will give careful consideration to what tissue banking arrangements will be needed for the future.

Cancer Services

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the current number of non-surgical oncologists in line with the Expert Advisory Group on Cancer consultative document entitled "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services".

Mr. Sackville: We are currently consulting on the proposals contained within the consultation document; final decisions are still some months away. We will be looking at manpower issues, but any changes required will be phased gradually over a number of years to allow for the required training of any additional staff and necessary changes to the organisation of cancer provision.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that patients will receive a firm diagnosis within a minimun of four weeks of a referral by their general practitioner to a hospital providing on-site comprehensive histology, cytology and radiography services.

Mr. Sackville: We recognise the fears and anxiety of patients who are concerned that they may have cancer and we consider it unacceptable for patients to wait an undue period for their results. In many places patients are already seen promptly. The expert advisory group on cancer's consultative document entitled "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services", copies of which are available in the Library, identifies the need to ensure appropriate referral from general practitioners and for patients to be seen by appropriately trained multi-disciplinary teams which should ensure patients are seen

more quickly. Commissioning authorities, hospitals and general practitioners are being consulted on the group's recommendations.

Sight Tests

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population was eligible for free NHS eye examinations in each of the last five financial years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Such estimates are not available.

Revenue Resource Allocation

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the share of the revenue resource allocation 1994-95, based on population adjusted for age and standardised mortality ratio and the weighted capitation target, *(b)* the actual allocation of the revenue resource allocation 1994-95 made, in pound sterling, as of April 1994, *(c)* the amounts in pound sterling, for London weighting market forces factors and Thames factor and other sums specivically allocated, *(d)* the amounts for additional moneys included in the actual allocations to region and the district health authorities, which are not weighted capitation target funded and *(e)* the contigency sums held back by the region or other top-sliced amounts not included in the allocation budgets to district health authorities for (i) each of the four Thames regional health authorities, (ii) each district health authorities in Greater London and (iii) England; and what was the method of sub-regional allocation of the four Thames regional health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce legislation to reform the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Bowis: We have been consulting on the need to amend section 18 of the Act relating to the return to hospital of detained patients who are absent without leave. We have also put forward proposals to amend the Act on extended leave and supervised discharge and will do so when parliamentary time permits.

General Practitioner Fundholders

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the scope of GP fund holding; and whether this requires primary legislation.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers will be reviewing the options for expanding and developing the fundholding scheme. Revisions to the scope of the list of goods and services for fundholding would not require primary legislation.

Burns Unit, Billericay

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *28*, if she is now in a position to announce when she will make a decision on the proposal to move the burns unit from Billericay to Broomfield hospital, Chelmsford; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The proposals have been referred to Ministers by the regional health authority, and a decision will be made in due course.

Diabetes

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she now expects the task force on diabetes to report; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The St. Vincent joint task force for diabetes is expected to offer initial advice to the Department of Health and the British Diabetic Association later this year on the implementation of the St. Vincent declaration. Further discussions are then expected to take place to identify possible courses of action and priorities.

Mr. John Sheppard

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will call for a report on the death of Mr. John Sheppard and the consequent actions of Brent council.

Mr. Bowis: The Department has been provided with information about the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. John Sheppard. I understand that Brent social services and housing departments have already taken steps to improve procedures to check on people who have social services discontinued or who accumulate large rent arrears.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of spending there has been on extra-contractual referrals in each region in each quarter for which statistics are available.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Executive quarterly monitoring system collects information by region on their actual spend on extra contractual referrals compared with planned levels of spend. This information is not audited and is only suitable for management purposes.

Homoeopathy, Liverpool

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the proposed closure of the homoeopathic service at Mossley Hill hospital in Liverpool.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member tabled an early day motion on 13 July, and the Department has received one letter from the North West Friends of Homoeopathy. North Mersey Community national health service trust is temporarily closing its homoeopathy in-patient unit; the hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. James, chairman of the trust, for further details.

Departmental Staff (Travel Costs)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *527*, what is the annual cost of travel for Department of Health and NHS Executive staff between Leeds and London.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 12 July at column *527*.

Steroids

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken to control the prescribing of prednisolone steroids; what information she has on the possible harmful side-effects of this drug; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The side-effects of prednisolone and other corticosteroids are well recognised. Information on the side-effects are widely available in the published literature including the product data sheets, which are authorised by the licensing authority and the British National Formulary which the Department sends free to all prescribers. Information on suspected adverse reactions is also provided to the Medicines Control Agency through the yellow card scheme for spontaneous reporting. Steroid treatment cards are routinely issued to patients which give clear guidance on the precautions to be taken and details of the prescribed drug, including dosage and duration of treatment.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Disposable Products

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy in respect of pre-stamping disposable products.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have it in mind to make use of the powers proposed by clauses 1-4 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, once enacted, to amend the Weights and Measures Act 1985 so as to make pre-stamping lawful in defined circumstances and subject to prescribed conditions.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in trade and industry matters.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. My Department contributed to its preparation. I welcome the publication of this document and would encourage everyone with an interest in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views.

Gas

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he still intends to introduce legislation to introduce competition to the domestic gas supply market as stated in paragraph 6 of the joint DTI/Ofgas consultative document, "Competition and Choice in the Gas Market"; and what form that legislation will take.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's policy, and the form of the legislation proposed, continue to be as described in the text referred to by the hon. Member.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which sections of the Gas Act 1986 require modification to establish competition in the domestic gas supply market.

Mr. Eggar: In the light of responses to the recent consultation on competition and choice in the gas market, my Department is preparing instructions on the legislative changes which will provide the basis for the new regulatory system. Several provisions of the Gas Act 1986 are likely to require modification. The precise sections will be identified in the process of the preparation of the instructions, and the subsequent consideration of them by Parliamentary Counsel.

ECGD

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the debt relief given to Jordan by the United Kingdom has been granted on past Export Credits Guarantee Department credits for defence equipment; and under which departmental budget such costs were carried.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom along with other official creditors in the Paris Club has agreed to reschedule Jordan's debts on three occasions. These agreements include debts of £255 million in respect of defence sales covered by ECGD. They provide for the debts to be repaid in full by Jordan, with interests being charged at a commercial rate.

The claims paid by ECGD in respect of these rescheduled debts are met from the ECGD vote for the relevant year. They are also reflected in ECGD's published trading accounts.

Coal Industry Act 1994

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the purpose of the reception to mark the Royal Assent to the Coal Industry Act 1994 on 19 July; who has been invited to this event; and what is its total cost.

Mr. Eggar: The reception on 19 July is to mark the Royal Assent to the Coal Industry Act 1994 and to thank many of those who have been involved in its passage. Those invited include hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee, including the hon. Gentleman, and others who worked on the Bill. The total cost is expected to be around £1,000.

Postal Services

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the options contained in the Green Paper on the future of postal services would require paving legislation.

Mr. McLoughlin: Paving legislation would be required for option 2, a 100 per cent. share sale of Royal Mail, and for option 3, joint ownership by Government, the public and employees, but not for option 1, commercial freedom within the public sector.

Gas Industry Regulation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he plans to introduce legislation in the next parliamentary Session to regulate the gas industry.

Mr. Eggar: The Government intend, subject to the availability of parliamentary time, to introduce legislation to provide the basis for the new regulatory system to come into operation by April 1996. The legislative programme

for the next Session has not been finalised, so I cannot say at this stage whether time will be found for a Gas Bill in 1994-95.

Cable Television

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how he regulates cable television companies to ensure that cable laying does not cause serious disruption to other local services and to local residents;

(2) what monitoring his Department carries out of fracturing of gas, water or electricity mains and other serious damage by cabling companies; and if he will publish a list of such incidents.

Mr. McLoughlin: Under the terms of their telecommunications licences, cable operators are required to carry out their street works in a responsible manner, to maintain effective liaison with other statutory undertakers, and to adhere to all relevant street works legislation. Street works are subject to the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, and its associated regulations. The Act imposes a duty on the cable operator to co-operate with the local highway authority in the interests of safety, to minimise the inconvenience to persons using the street and to protect the structure of the street and the integrity of apparatus in it. The Act makes an undertaker liable to pay compensation for damage caused to another undertaker's apparatus.

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the procedure for reviewing the terms of a franchise awarded to companies laying cables for television.

Mr. McLoughlin: Franchises are awarded to cable television companies by the Independent Television Commission, which also has responsibility for those franchises awarded by its predecessor, the Cable Authority. All franchisees are required to be licensed under both broadcasting and telecommunications legislation. Review of the terms of broadcasting licences for cable programme services is a matter for the ITC. Responsibility for review of the terms of a telecommunications licence governing the running of a telecommunications system rests with the Office of Telecommunications. Review of the terms governing the installation of that system are for DTI to consider.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out for each year from 1985-86 to 1993-94 *(a)* the number of offers made for regional, selective assistance, *(b)* the value of the offers and *(c)* the number of requests for regional selective assistance refused.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The number and value of offers made and the number of requests refused for regional selective assistance in England from 1985-1986 to 1992-93 is set out in the table. Information on regional selective assistance for 1993-94 is not yet available.

	Offers Made		*Number of*
	Number	*Value £ million*	*applications rejected*
1985-86	720	110·9	146
1986-87	1,025	122·2	102
1987-88	1,553	164·1	125
1988-89	1,261	120·3	134
1989-90	1,180	101·5	132
1990-91	906	98·9	92
1991-92	787	89·4	154
1992-93	834	94·9	146

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Film Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to be able to announce the results of his recent consultations about his policy with regard to the British film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: During the consultation round, and subsequently, I have received numerous proposals aimed at increasing the level of private investment in British film production. Some of the issues raised are not straightforward, and affect the interests of other Departments. I shall make an announcement as soon as practicable.

Television Licences

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what plans he has to extend the current concessions in television licence fees to partially blind people; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to give further concessions in the television licence fee for blind people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no plans to increase the current reduction in the television licence fee for registered blind people, or to introduce a similar concession for registered partially sighted people.

Cross-media Ownership

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to introduce legislation in the next parliamentary Session to reform the rules covering cross-media ownership.

Mr. Brooke: Ministers will be considering a report reviewing the cross-media ownership rules shortly. An announcement about the outcome of the review, including any legislative implications, is likely in the autumn.

Tourism

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was earned by the tourism industry in the United Kingdom from foreign tourists; and how much was spent by United Kingdom residents on tourism abroad, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Information on this topic is published each month in "CSO First Release" titled "Overseas Travel and Tourism".

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Organisation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what response the Commissioners have made to the Archbishops Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners have submitted a factual note to the Turnbull commission tracing the way in which the Commissioners' functions have developed through the years. Further evidence may be submitted in due course. The First Church Commissioner, Sir Michael Colman, is a member of the Turnbull commission and has submitted his own evidence.

Official Accommodation

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is his estimate of the current annual cost of official accommodation for bishops and archbishops.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners have budgeted £2·1 million in 1994 for the upkeep of the 45 official residence of diocesan bishops and the two archbishops, with a further £0·7 million for possible capital works. The cost of maintaining the 69 houses occupied by suffragan bishops is estimated at £0·4 million, though these costs are shared equally with dioceses.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made on the outcome of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development talks on the future of Sudan and on the desirability of a new international initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We support the IGADD initiative which is still continuing. The third round of talks between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army factions is due on 18 July in Nairobi.

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the United Nations is taking in Burundi to stop *(a)* the operators of radio stations and *(b)* political parties promoting genocidal activity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of reports of radio stations in Burundi inciting Burundians to inter-tribal violence. The United Nations has yet to confirm these reports, but if such activities were found to be taking place it would strongly condemn them and call for them to cease forthwith as it has done in the case of Rwanda.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about extrajudicial killings on a tribal basis in Bujumbura in Burundi; and what representations are being made and what actions are being taken by international organisations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are concerned at reports that tribal killings may have taken place in Bujumbura and other areas of Burundi. The United Nations Secretary-General will advise on appropriate action if these reports are confirmed by the United Nations or the Organisation of African Unity presence in Burundi.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Australian and Canadian high commissions concerning their use of enforced subject access, in the manner described in the 10th report of the Data Protection Registrar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Procedures used by other Governments to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of prospective immigrants from the United Kingdom are a matter for them—provided, of course, that they are consistent with British law.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will initiate measures to prevent the Government of Rwanda taking over the presidency of the United Nations Security Council in September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Consultations are already in train over the question of Rwanda's presidency of the Council, which has to be considered in the light of the evolving situation in Rwanda.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase his logistical support to the United Nations operation in Rwanda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in discussion with the United Nations about UNAMIR's continuing requirement for logistic support.

Operation Turquoise

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Nations is on schedule to take over responsibility from the French Government's Operation Turquoise at the end of this month; how many troops have been committed; and whether the necessary logistical support has been pledged.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN is continuing to strengthen UNAMIR pursuant to its mandate under SCR 918. UNIMAR currently consists of 328 troops, including an advance contingent of 206 Ghanaian troops who arrived in Kigali on 6 July, a Canadian signals unit and a Bangladeshi company as well as 250 military observers from a wide range of countries.

Canada, Senegal, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Tunisia have pledged further troops. The UN has received offers of logistical support from a number of countries, including the United States, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Hong Kong

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for naturalisation as British Dependent Territories citizens on

the basis of a connection with Hong Kong have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in 1993 and 1994 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

	1993	*[1]1994*
Applications received	12,280	9,435
Applications granted	2,332	1,954
Applications refused	137	93
Outstanding	9,739	7,388

[1] *First six months.*

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British Dependent Territories citizens from Hong Kong have applied for and been granted the status of British national, overseas, in 1993 and 1994 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

	1993	*[1]1994*
Applications received	523,767	496,613
Applications granted	471,379	400,844
Outstanding	52,388	95,769

[1] First six months.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the remit of the United Nations tribunal on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under Security Council Resolution 827 which established the war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia, the tribunal has power to prosecute and try persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in former Yugoslavia since 1991.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who are the judges who have been appointed to the United Nations tribunal on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia; and what is the British contribution to the work of the tribunal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 7 July at column *288* for the details of the judges of the tribunal. The United Kingdom has submitted four batches of evidence of alleged atrocities to the United Nations Commission of Experts, which has passed its findings to the tribunal. The United Kingdom will submit any further evidence direct to the tribunal. The United Kingdom will contribute funding to the tribunal through its share of the United Nations regular budget which amounts to 5·02 per cent. of the costs. We have also contributed £20,000 worth of computer and camera equipment to the prosecutor's office.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many explanatory statements, related to entry clearance appeals, were awaiting typing at each post in the Indian sub-continent, in Manila, Kingston, Bangkok, Lagos and Accra at the latest available date; how many staff are employed, both full time and part time, to type statements; and when he expects the backlogs to be cleared.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am seeking the information requested.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person, applying for entry clearance for settlement at the British post in *(a)* Manila, *(b)* Accra, *(c)* Lagos, *(d)* Kingston, *(e)* Nicosia, *(f)* Cairo, *(g)* Bangkok, *(h)* Rabat and *(i)* each post in each country of the Indian sub-continent on 31 March or the latest convenient date, could expect to wait for (i) interview, (ii) referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, (iii) decisions and (iv) an explanatory statement prepared by the post in the event of an appeal against a refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am seeking the information requested.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for (1) single entry and (2) multiple entry visit visas were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused at each post in the Indian subcontinent, Ghana, Nigeria, the Philippines and Jamaica in each quarter of 1993 and the first quarter of 1994; and what was the delay between application and interview for those whose applications were felt to need a second or long interview at each of the above posts in (i) June 1993, (ii) January 1994 and (iii) June 1994 or the nearest available date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The total number of single and multiple visa applications received, granted and refused in 1993 is as follows:

Applications 1993

	Applied for	*Issued*	*Refused*
Accra			
Single	10,466	6,364	3,883
Multiple	4,710	4,354	46
Bombay			
Single	16,354	13,366	2,774
Multiple	17,268	16,752	390
Islamabad			
Single	25,937	18,730	6,561
Multiple	8,313	6,568	81
Karachi			
Single	15,673	12,601	1,955
Multiple	8,150	7,697	174
Kaduna			
Single	4,307	2,649	1,139
Multiple	1,936	1,808	35
Manila			
Single	9,980	8,928	812
Multiple	2,508	2,329	87
Kingston			
Single	2,272	1,594	688
Multiple	148	147	1

	Applied for	Issued	Refused
Lagos			
Single	28,351	15,721	8,927
Multiple	14,266	12,697	481
Madras			
Single	4,754	4,568	182
Multiple	4,344	4,312	19
New Delhi			
Single	22,576	18,097	3,090
Multiple	12,558	12,053	102
Dhaka			
Single	10,406	7,125	3,187
Multiple	3,887	3,887	—
Calcutta			
Single	3,259	3,048	186
Multiple	3,264	3,155	38

I am seeking the other information requested.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications from residents of the republics of the former Soviet Union have been granted since April 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Entry clearances granted by British diplomatic and consular posts in the former Soviet Union were:

1992 – 49,732
1993 – 69,758

Precise information on how many of these were granted to residents of the FSU is not available, but no doubt the great majority would have been.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for entry clearance as *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés, *(d)* fiancées in each British post in all countries for which figures are available apart from those of the Indian subcontinent were (i) granted and (ii) refused in each quarter since January 1993; how many such applications in each category, at each post and in each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because of the primary purpose rule; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were *(x)* wholly and *(y)* partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information could be provided in the form requested only at disproportionate cost. However, in 1993 a total of 15,228 entry clearances for settlement were issued and 2,759 refused by posts other than those in the Indian sub-continent.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the discrepancies in eligibility of the United Kingdom's representatives to the Committee of the Regions from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, to claim re-imbursement of expenses incurred by themselves in pursuance of their duties; and what proposals he has to remove those discrepancies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any such discrepancies. All United Kingdom full members and alternate members of the Committee of the Regions will be entitled to the same allowances for meetings they attend in Brussels on official Committee of the Regions business.

Malaysia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the name of the Malaysian Defence Minister who visited the United Kingdom during the period 4 to 11 July; and which United Kingdom officials or Ministers he met or communicated with.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During a private visit to the United Kingdom from 29 June to 3 July the Malaysian Defence Minister, Dato Sri Najib, called on my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Malaysian Prime Minister last visited the United Kingdom; and which United Kingdom officials or Ministers he communicated with.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Malaysian Prime Minister was last in the United Kingdom in October 1993 on a private visit. The Prime Minister sent a message to him during his stay.

Tiger Conservation Schemes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is being provided by his Department for tiger conservation schemes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 18 April 1994 at column *376*. In recognition of the fact that tigers are endangered, we would be prepared to consider providing support for tiger conservation. At the United Kingdom's instigation, European Environment Ministers issued a statement in June expressing concern about pressure on tiger populations, condemning the illegal trade in tiger products and undertaking to be particularly vigilant in enforcing CITES for this species.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what legal authority the Governor of St. Helena was acting in excluding a German national, Mr. Timmreck, from St. Helena; and what assessment he has made of the effect of United Kingdom obligations under the human rights convention.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The acting governor made an exclusion order against the German national, Mr. Timmreck, in exercise of the power vested in him by section 10(1) of the Immigration Ordinance 1972. We are satisfied that the action of the acting governor in this case is entirely consistent with the United Kingdom's international human rights obligations.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *427*, what plans he has to arrange for a United Kingdom Member of the European Parliament to look after the interests of Gibraltar in the Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A number of United Kingdom MEPs have, without prompting from us, taken an active interest in Gibraltar's affairs and ensured that Gibraltarian concerns have been aired in the European Parliament.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Brian Charrington

34. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement regarding the case of Mr. Brian Charrington.

The Attorney-General: The case of Mr. Brian Charrington was at all stages conducted by HM Customs and Excise which is an independent prosecuting authority. The decision to withdraw the case was taken entirely by the Commissioners on the advice of prosecuting counsel. I refer the hon. Member to the detailed answers that I gave on 26 January at column *246* to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and on 7 February at column *13* to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay).

Crown Prosecution Service

35. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to visit the Crown Prosecution Service offices in greater Manchester to discuss the work of that office.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General has no plans at present to visit the North West area of the Crown Prosecution Service, of which Greater Manchester is a part. However, I visited the Crown Prosecution Service offices in Manchester on 29 and 30 June 1994.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Attorney-General what plans his Department has to place some of the legal work it currently performs out to competitive tendering; and in what areas.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 8 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *337*, I have no present plans for competitive tendering of legal work in the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office but this is one of the possibilities to be considered in the prior options studies. The legal services provided by the Treasury Solicitor's Department are subject to market testing by client departments. In such cases the Treasury Solicitor may participate in competitive tendering for work that was previously placed with him.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Charles McGhee

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what charges have been brought against Mr. Charles McGhee, prisoner 2170, Her Majesty's prison Parkhurst; with what result; and for what reasons he is still on the punishment wing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Mr. Chris Mullin, dated 18 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what charges have been brought against Mr. Charles McGhee at Parkhurst prison, their results and for what reasons he is still on the punishment wing.

Mr. McGhee is a difficult prisoner who has been subject to forty reports, twelve of which are for assaults on staff. Given his behaviour, the governor at Parkhurst placed Mr. McGhee in the segregation unit, in the interests of continuing the smooth operation of the prison. The governor has discussed with Mr. McGhee the possibility of him being placed on normal location but Mr. McGhee is not prepared to improve his conduct.

Since his arrival at Parkhurst, Mr. McGhee has not had any charges placed against him.

Organised Crime, London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of murders within the Greater London area that are related to organised crime or protection rackets in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: No such estimates have been made.

EU Borders Centre

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place in the Library reports received by the Department from the clearing house centre for information discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Documents received by the Home Office from the centre for information, discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration will be made available for parliamentary scrutiny where they fall within the criteria for deposit in accordance with the Government's proposed scrutiny arrangements for title VI matters.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of staff work full time or part time for the centre for information, discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The centre for information, discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration is an intergovernmental working group established under the third pillar of the treaty on European Union. It has no staff of its own but receives administrative support from the Council Secretariat.

Prison Documents (Foreign Languages)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the official foreign language prison documents available to foreign prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 18 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the official foreign language documents that are available to foreign prisoners being held in prisons in England and Wales.

The foreign language documents issued centrally by the Prison Service are:

The Prisoners' Information Pack
The Foreign Prisoners' Resource Pack
The Race Relations Policy Statement
Custody, Care and Justice: The way ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales
How to make a request or a complaint
Information on the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984.

Other foreign language documents may also have been produced locally by establishments or by other agencies, but details are not kept centrally.

Identity Cards

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Data Protection Registrar about identity cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There have been no discussions with the Data Protection Registrar on identity cards. The question of a national identity card scheme is kept under review. If a decision was made to introduce a scheme there would be a full consultation exercise.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with other Government Departments regarding the possible introduction of personal identifiers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Prime Minister to a Question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 15 July at column *778*.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with private sector companies regarding the introduction of identity cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Some of the technical issues concerning identity cards have arisen in discussions which officials have had with private sector companies in the context of a wider study of smartcard applications in Government. If we decided to pursue the idea of an identity card scheme there would be a full consultation exercise.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the fraudulent use of identity cards in those EC countries where they are compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office holds no information about the fraudulent use of identity cards in European Union countries. Information is compiled by the Immigration Service about the detected incidences of fraudulent use of identity cards at the point of entry to the United Kingdom.

In 1993 there were 60 recorded instances of the attempted fraudulent use of an identity card of the six European Union countries which have a compulsory identity card scheme.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the costs of introducing an identity card scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 16 May 1994 at column *338*.

Police Women

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of posts in each rank of the police are held by women.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

As at 30 April 1994

Rank	*Number of female officers*	*Percentage of female officers*
Deputy chief constable	1	2·0
Assistant chief constable	4	3·5
Chief superintendent	11	2·5
Superintendent	32	2·5
Chief inspector	57	2·7
Inspector	251	3·7
Sergeant	1,090	5·5
Constables	15,524	16·0
Total	16,970	13·3

Research Department

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the titles together with dates of completion of all reports compiled since 1991, and the titles and projected completion dates of those currently being compiled, by the Home Office research department.

Mr. Howard: It is the policy of the Department to publish the results of research undertaken by the research and planning unit. Projects undertaken in 1993-94 are all in the programme for that year, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. The 1994-95 programme will be published shortly.

The precise form and publication of future reports are not settled in advance.

The next reports we expect to publish are:

Intensive Probation in England and Wales:
An evaluation Policing low-level disorder: Police use of Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986.
Explaining Reconviction Rates.
Various British Crime reports.
Improving bail decisions.
Public interest case assessment schemes.
Case screening by the Crown Prosecution Service: How and why cases are terminated.
Theft of firearms.
A survey of satisfaction with Group 4's prisoner escort service.
Practitioners' views of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act.
The settlement of refugees.
Study of Vietnamese refugees.
Neighbourhood Watch.
Probation Motor Projects.
Survey of Prison Staff.
Equal Opportunities and the Fire Service.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the independent review tribunal on miscarriages of justice to be introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Legislation will be necessary before the proposed criminal cases review authority can be

established. I cannot at present say when this legislation will be introduced, but my hope is that this will be at the earliest practicable date.

Lenient Sentences

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps are being taken to extend his powers to refer unduly lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Maclean: After the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill has received Royal Assent, my right hon. and learned Friend intends to make an order extending the scope of the Attorney-General's power so as to include cases of serious fraud.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rights the spouse of a European economic area national exercising free movement rights in the United Kingdom may exercise before leaving the United Kingdom when he or she has been refused leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The spouse of a European economic area national who is exercising rights of residence in the United Kingdom under the EC treaty is entitled to reside here with the EEA national. However, we do not accept that a spouse who is party to a marriage of convenience has any right to benefit from Community law on free movement and residence.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been put in place or are being put in place to give effect to the right of businesses based in another member state of the European Union under article 59 of the EC treaty to send a work force to complete a contract in the United Kingdom when the work force includes third country nationals who are employees of the business.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None, but we keep the situation under review in the light of judgments of the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *253*, in respect of the 29 entry clearance applications which have been made at British diplomatic posts abroad by persons who are not European economic area nationals and who have sought entry as family members of British citizens who have exercised treaty rights in another member state, what was the average processing time of these applications; how many were granted; and how many were refused.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Of these 29 entry clearance applications, 22 were granted and seven refused.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, in respect of the European economic area, non-European economic area national family members of European economic area nationals who were refused entry clearance or leave to remain in the United Kingdom since March 1993, and the grounds on which the refusals were based.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is available only in respect of after entry applications for residence documents of limited validity. Between March 1993 and the end of June 1994, 56 applications were refused from non-European economic area nationals for a residence document of limited validity as the family member of an EEA national. Information is not available about the individual grounds on which these refusals were based.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, in respect of the 39 applications involving marriage between a non-European economic area national and a European economic area national in respect of which an interview has been carried out since March 1993; what was the nationality of the non-European economic area national; and what was the outcome of the application after interview.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Of these 39 applications, 34 were granted and five refused, following the interview.

The nationalities of the 39 EEA nationals, and their non-EEA spouses, and the outcome of their applications, are as follows:

EEA national		*Non-EEA national*		*Outcome of application*	
Danish	1	Croatian	1	Granted	1
Dutch	1	Malaysian	1	Granted	1
French	4	Algerian	1	Granted	1
		Egyptian	1	Granted	1
		Moroccan	1	Granted	1
		Nigerian	1	Granted	1
German	2	Brazilian	1	Granted	1
		Ghanaian	1	Granted	1
Irish	22	Algerian	2	Granted	2
		Ghanaian	2	Granted	2
		Iranian	1	Refused	1
		Malaysian	1	Granted	1
		Moroccan	5	Granted	3
				Refused	2
		Nigerian	7	Granted	6
				Refused	1
		Filipino	1	Granted	1
		Turkish	2	Granted	2
		Yugoslavian	1	Granted	1
Italian	2	Nigerian	2	Granted	2

EEA national		Non-EEA national		Outcome of application	
Portuguese	4	Algerian	1	Granted	1
		Egyptian	1	Refused	1
		Malaysian	1	Granted	1
		Moroccan	1	Granted	1
Spanish	3	Algerian	2	Granted	2
		Polish	1	Granted	1
TOTALS	39		39	Granted	34
				Refused	5

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom since 1 January by *(a)* nationality and *(b)* immigration status at the time of application.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information covering the first six months of 1994 on applications for asylum by the location of the application and nationality is given in the table. Information on the immigration status of the applicant upon applying is not readily available.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by nationality and location where made, 1 Janaury to 30 June 1994

[2]Number of principal applicants

	[3]Total	Applied at port	Applied in country
Europe			
Bulgaria	65	5	60
Romania	115	20	90
Turkey	1,035	295	740
Former USSR	265	25	240
Former Yugoslavia	715	155	560
Other	240	75	160
Total	2,430	575	1,855
Americas			
Colombia	195	125	70
Other	295	80	215
Total	490	205	285
Africa			
Angola	245	70	175
Ethiopia	360	105	255
Ghana	1,030	195	835
Kenya	755	520	235
Nigeria	1,750	165	1,585
Sierra Leone	660	225	435
Somalia	705	325	380
Sudan	155	35	120
Togo and Ivory Coast	375	210	165
Uganda	170	45	120
Zaire	365	165	200
Other	835	220	615
Total	7,400	2,280	5,120
Middle East			
Iran	220	55	165
Iraq	225	95	130
Lebanon	105	35	70
Other	280	115	160
Total	825	300	525
Asia			
China	145	70	75
India	890	90	795
Pakistan	800	75	725
Sri Lanka	1,250	695	555
Other	400	145	255
Total	3,480	1,075	2,410
Other, and nationality not known	105	105	—
Grand total	14,730	4,540	10,190

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Figures do not include overseas applications.

Police Complaints Authority

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new appointments have been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Howard: Ms Molly Meacher and Mr. Navnit Dholakia OBE have accepted my invitation to serve as members of the Police Complaints Authority and will take up their appointments on 15 August.

Ms Meacher was previously adviser to the chairman of the Russian Federal Employment Service, and formerly director of Action Trust, now the Employment Policy Institute.

Mr. Dholakia will join the Police Complaints Authority after 18 years with the Commission for Racial Equality, where he has been responsible for administration of justice issues.

ENVIRONMENT

Access to Personal Files

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the costs of implementing the Access to Personal Files Act 1987.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has not collected information about the costs of implementing the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. Authorities are empowered to charge fees which should make the operation of the new requirements imposed by the Act self-financing.

Environmental Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost in 1994 in each county in England, and in total, of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme.

Mr. Atkins: The Countryside Commission, which operates the countryside stewardship, hedgerow incentive and countryside premium schemes on behalf of the Secretary of State, does not keep the requested information on a county basis, but records expenditure by its regional offices. English Nature, which has operated the wildlife enhancement scheme as a three-year pilot since 1 April 1992, similarly does not record expenditure on a county basis, but by pilot area.

Estimated grant expenditure for countryside stewardship for each of the commission's regional offices for the financial year 1994-95 is as follows:

	£
Northern	1,590,000
North West	1,105,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,385,000
Midlands	1,238,500
Eastern	1,448,500
South East	2,126,500
South West	2,456,500
Total	11,350,000

These figures include expenditure on the hedgerow incentive scheme, which is now fully integrated into the countryside stewardship scheme.

The estimated cost of payments under the countryside premium scheme for 1994-95 is £453,600. The scheme operates in the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk. The commission does not have disaggregated data, and these could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

The estimated cost of payments for 1994-95 under the wildlife enhancement scheme are as follows:

	£
Pevensey levels (Sussex)	152,500
Culm grasslands (Devon)	83,500
Coversand heaths and peatlands (Yorkshire/Humberside)	152,500
Craven limestone grasslands	310,200
Dorset heaths (Dorset)	141,000
Thames basin and Wealden heaths (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex)	127,000
Magnesian limestone grassland (Tyne and Wear, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire)	56,000
Hereford and Worcester grasslands (Hereford and Worcester)	35,500
Other[1]	41,800
Total	1,100,000

[1] Includes administrative and publicity costs and a small amount of money yet to be allocated.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost in 1993 in each county in England, and in total, of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme.

Mr. Atkins: These payments are not recorded on a county basis. Grant expenditure for countryside stewardship and the hedgerow incentives schemes for each of the Countryside Commission's regional offices for the financial year 1993-94 was as follows:

	Countryside Stewardship £	*Hedgerow Incentive* £
Northern	960,000	123,000
North West	805,000	96,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	938,000	89,000
Midlands	617,000	171,000
Eastern	1,104,000	95,000
South East	1,499,000	55,000
South West	1,649,000	142,000
TOTAL	7,572,000	771,000

Expenditure on payments under the countryside premium scheme in the financial year 1993-94 in the seven counties in which the scheme operates was £599,861. The commission does not have disaggregated data, and these could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

Payments for 1993-94 under the wildlife enhancement scheme for each of English Nature's pilot areas were as follows:

	£
Pevensey levels (Sussex)	150,000
Culm grasslands (Devon)	81,100
Coversands heaths and peatlands (Yorkshire and Humberside)	132,700
Craven limeston grasslands (Yorkshire)	164,600
Dorset heaths (Dorset)	0
Thames basin and Wealden heaths (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex)	0
Magnesian limestone grassland (Tyne and Wear, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire	0
Hereford and Worcester grasslands (Hereford and Worcestershire)	0
Other[1]	16,600
TOTAL	545,000

[1] Includes administrative and publicity costs.

Barn Conversions (Planning Policy)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent changes there have been to the planning policy guidance with relation to barn conversion in green belt designated areas.

Mr. Baldry: None. National policy is set out in planning policy guidance note 2, "Green Belts". Paragraph 16 of that document states that the re-use of redundant buildings in green belts should not be refused unless there are specific and convincing reasons which cannot be overcome by attaching conditions to the planning permission.

Paragraph 12 of PPG2 states that the general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in green belts. Thus conversion of redundant buildings in the green belt will be subject to the safeguards on re-use set out in paragraph 2.15 and annexe D of planning policy guidance note 7, "The Countryside and the Rural Economy".

Our consultation draft revision of PPG2, issued earlier this year, proposes removing the redundancy limitation from the PPG2 advice and we are currently analysing the more than 600 responses received to that document.

Building Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for the change in price levels of building materials.

Mr. Baldry: Information on construction material price indices is published in the Department's "Monthly Statistics of Building Materials And Components", a copy of which is placed in the Library of the House. The "all work" index in table 1 indicates a rise of some 4½ per cent. between May 1993 and May 1994.

Vehicle Emissions (London)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has received about the impact of vehicle emissions on air quality in London.

Mr. Atkins: The London energy study carried out by the London Research Centre was published on 15 September 1993. It was funded by the European Commission, London Electricity plc and the Department of the Environment. One of the principal outputs of the study was a very detailed inventory of energy use, and the resultant emissions of pollutants to the London atmosphere covering almost 2,000 sq km in and around London. The table illustrates the contribution from road transport for each pollutant in 1991.

London road transport 1991

	Percentage of total emissions
Carbon dioxide (as carbon)	33
Sulphur dioxide	22
Black smoke	96
Carbon monoxide	99
Nitrogen oxides	76
Volatile organic compounds	97

Zoo Licensing Act 1981

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of *(a)* zoological gardens, *(b)* wildlife parks, *(c)* circuses, *(d)* aquaria, *(e)* vivaria and *(f)* insectaria subject to the full requirements of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981; and how many of each category have been granted dispensations from the requirements of the Act in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: According to our latest information, 226 zoos are currently licensed in England under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981. During the last five years, the total number of dispensations granted under section 14(2) of the Act have been:

	Number
1990	12
1991	13
1992	6
1993	7
1994	3

These figures include dispensations given for aquaria, vivaria and insectaria although they do not differentiate between collections according to species. Dispensations granted under the Act do not in any way weaken a zoo's requirement to meet the standards of modern zoo practice of animal welfare and public safety set out by the Secretary of State. The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 does not apply to circuses.

High Street, Bedford

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to consider and adjudicate on an urgent application for a listed building consent covering premises 29 to 41 High Street, Bedford.

Mr. Curry: We have consulted English Heritage on the proposals. As soon as we have that organisation's advice we will consider whether the application should be called in for my right hon. Friend to determine.

Environment Agencies

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he still intends to introduce the environment agencies paving Bill in the current session of Parliament.

Mr. Atkins: As my right hon. Friend the Lord President said last week, there is now no prospect of passing the environment agencies paving Bill before the summer recess. However, the Government remain committed to introducing legislation to establish the agencies as soon as parliamentary time allows and, as the Lord President also said, good progress is being made on a main Bill.

MINIS 15 Documents

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his Department's management information system for MINIS 15 documents.

Mr. Gummer: I am today publishing MINIS 15 and a set of documents has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Local Government

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Local Government Commission on its estimates of the financial implications of the options for reorganisation of local government in Somerset, North Yorkshire and North Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have asked the Local Government Commission to provide the Department with a further analysis of its estimates of the costs and savings that might be expected from the options for reorganisation contained in its reports for Somerset and for North Yorkshire and North Humberside.

In the case of Somerset, we have asked the Commission how the costs and savings of the three unitary options recommended in its report might vary under alternative three unitary options that did not involve splitting Mendip.

In the case of North Yorkshire and North Humberside, the Commission's report gave estimates of costs and savings for a range of options for the whole review area north of the Humber. The Department has asked the Commission to give a breakdown of costs and savings between the North Yorkshire area, and the North

Humberside area for three of the options in its report: those for eight unitary authorities, four unitary authorities, and modified two-tier.

The estimates of potential costs and savings are important considerations that will inform our decisions. In both these cases we feel that further information on how costs and savings might vary between alternative options will help all concerned to assess which option is likely to be most cost-effective. The additional information will be sent to the authorities concerned and placed in the Library of the House at the same time as it is sent to the Department. The Commission hopes that this will be within the next three to four weeks.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he makes and what studies have been undertaken or are available to him of the transitional costs including redundancy and serverance payments of the local government review, England, where *(a)* all employees are transferred to new unitary authorities, *(b)* 95 per cent. are transferred and *(c)* 90 per cent. are transferred.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* We have not attempted to estimate costs in this way. However, each report of the Local Government Commission gives the estimated range of total transitional costs for the proposed structural options, which includes staff redundancy and retirement costs, in line with the Ernst and Young financial methodology.

Water Charges

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to equalise water charges at the lower level in areas where different water authorities overlap and one authority is obliged to act as a collecting agent on another's behalf.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* Each company incurs costs in providing water and sewerage services relative to its topographic and demographic situation, and its particular investment needs. It follows that customers' water and sewerage charges should reflect the costs incurred by the company which provides the particular service.

Air Quality

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist to promote open government with specific regard to the publication of air quality levels in urban areas.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* Information from the Department of the Environment's national automatic monitoring sites is used to provide air quality bulletins to the public, giving daily information on air pollution in both urban and rural areas across the United Kingdom via a freephone helpline, Ceefax, Teletext and a variety of other news media. The bulletin includes information on levels of pollutants which are described as "very good", "good", "poor" or "very poor" together with a forecast and health advice on what to do should levels become high. The Ceefax and Teletext bulletin services have recently been upgraded and now provide hourly updates on nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulphur dioxide and benzene.

In addition, information from the Department's non-automatic and automatic monitoring sites is published regularly.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom by the year 2005.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* The United Kingdom's climate change programme is based on projections from energy paper 59. These show that in 2005 the underlying trend in emissions may be between about 6 and about 40 million tonnes of carbon—MtC—above the level in 1990. In January, the Government announced a programme of measures designed to fulfil its commitment, under the United Nations framework convention on climate change, of aiming to return greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2000. No targets have been set under the convention for emissions levels beyond 2000 and therefore no programme of measures is in place beyond that date. However, provisional estimates made by my Department indicate that the continuing effect of measures already in place could reduce emissions in 2005 by at least 10 MtC.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Northern Ireland Airports Authority has been advised of the designated dates to fly the Union flag; why the Union flag was not flown on 12 July at Aldergrove airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The requirement to fly the Union flag on those prescribed days relevant to Northern Ireland applies to central Government offices only. There is no requirement, therefore, for Northern Ireland Airports Ltd to comply.

Belfast Action Team

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are to change the role of the Belfast action team; what changes there will be in the funding of the Belfast action team; and if he will make a statement on the future roles of the Belfast action team in the council areas of Belfast and Castlereagh.

Mr. Tim Smith: There are no proposals to change the role of the Belfast action teams. Funding for the teams was provided for in the 1993 Public Expenditure Survey which covers the years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Foyle Shopping Centre

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the budgeted contribution of public funds to the proposed Foyle shopping centre in the city of Londonderry; from which sources these public funds are being made available; and what is the estimated total cost of the Foyle centre.

Mr. Tim Smith: The public sector contribution to the Foyleside shopping centre comprises an offer of urban

development grant of up to £7·5 million and the transfer of the site at a nominal value. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is the funding source. The total cost is estimated to be £65 million.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the minimum, maximum and average waiting times for *(a)* unfair dismissal, *(b)* redundancy rights, *(c)* maternity rights, *(d)* race discrimination and *(e)* other claims in Northern Ireland; and what were the waiting times in 1979, 1989 and 1993.

Mr. Tim Smith: No information is available for 1979 and information for 1989 and 1993 is not available in the form requested. Northern Ireland does not have race discrimination legislation.

The following table gives the percentage of industrial tribunal cases which came to a first hearing within the time limits specified:

Time limit (weeks)	*1989*	*1993*
12	1	6
26	28	50
39	72	72
50	91	82

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to increase the maximum awards which may be made to successful applicants by industrial tribunals.

Mr. Tim Smith: Awards in cases of sex discrimination are not subject to an upper limit. Consideration is being given to the limits applicable in other cases.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now increase the financial resources available to industrial tribunals.

Mr. Tim Smith: The financial resources allocated to industrial tribunals for 1994-95 have increased over those for last year.

Abortion

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether he will make a statement on his response to the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the laws on abortion;

(2) when he expects to publish the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report on the law of abortion in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The nineteenth annual report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which contains the commission's report and recommendations on abortion law in Northern Ireland, was published on 30 June 1994 along with my response. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library. The recommendations made by the commission are being carefully considered.

Fair Employment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many certificates have been issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under section 42, in each year since the passing of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976.

Sir John Wheeler: Since 1986 the following certificates have been issued by my right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors under section 42 of Fair Employment Act 1976:

Patrick Gilmore, 1986.
John Tinnelly & Sons Ltd., 1987
F. W. Devlin, 1993.
Liam Devenney, 1993.
Thomas McCullough, 1994.

Information prior to 1986 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what legislation or extradition agreements cover persons accused of trafficking in illegal drugs between the jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and accused of, or sought in relation to, dealing in such drugs in one jurisdiction who flee to the other.

Sir John Wheeler: People accused of trafficking in illegal drugs in Northern Ireland are covered by the Criminal Justice (Confiscation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990 as amended by the Criminal Justice (Confiscation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

People accused of, or sought in relation to, drug trafficking offences committed in either jurisdiction who have fled to the other are covered by the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 or part III of the Irish Extradition Act 1965.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Calves' Brains

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will ban the use in human food of brains and spinal cords of calves under the age of six months.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 13 July at column *644-45*.

Environmental Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost in 1993 for each county in England, and in total, of payments made under *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme, *(b)* the nitrate-sensitive area scheme, *(c)* the farm and conservation grant scheme, *(d)* the pilot beef and sheep extensification schemes, *(e)* the woodland grant scheme, *(f)* the farm woodland premium scheme, *(g)* the orchard grubbing scheme, *(h)* the optional five-year set-aside scheme, *(i)* the habitat scheme, *(j)* the moorland scheme, *(k)* the countryside access scheme and *(l)* the organic aid scheme; and what is her estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Details of payments by English County under the farm and conservation grant scheme, the farm woodland premium scheme and the nitrate-sensitive areas scheme are set out in table A.

Information on the other schemes listed is not held in the format required to allow breakdown by county, which could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Total payments under each scheme in the 1993-94 financial year, and estimates for 1994-95, are given in table B.

Table A

County	*Farm and conservation grant scheme* (£)	*Farm woodland premium scheme* (£)	*Nitrate-sensitive areas scheme* (£)
Avon	304,204	1,788	—
Bedford	162,127	6,050	—
Berkshire	141,566	9,263	—
Buckinghamshire	215,992	11,895	—
Cambridgeshire	137,545	10,475	—
Cheshire	1,147,364	1,225	—
Cleveland	96,818	5,995	—
Cornwall	1,622,808	24,796	—
Cumbria	2,782,492	2,795	—
Derbyshire	746,486	2,788	—
Devon	2,609,138	58,970	—
Dorset	768,257	13,563	—
Durham	360,865	4,116	—
Essex	439,835	35,245	—
Gloucestershire	469,368	30,503	—
Hampshire	410,342	14,393	—
Hereford and Worcester	855,170	64,953	100,737
Hertfordshire	127,989	2,335	—
Humberside	353,272	12,918	15,107
Isle of Wight	17,706	2,875	—
Kent	508,772	15,275	—
Lancashire	1,971,018	2,343	—
Leicestershire	499,840	15,158	—
Lincolnshire	469,770	29,713	789,713
London, Greater	9,154	—	—
Manchester, Greater	97,432	—	—
Merseyside	45,586	—	—
Norfolk	477,287	20,533	—
Northamptonshire	240,792	9,518	—
Northumberland	575,490	14,657	—
Nottinghamshire	126,330	2,675	226,305
Oxfordshire	276,204	35,491	74,540
Scilly Isles	—	—	—
Shropshire	975,634	12,660	—
Somerset	1,006,530	3,275	55,858
Staffordshire	825,239	4,956	66,703
Suffolk	476,255	24,665	—
Surrey	174,298	3,588	—
Sussex, East	183,739	14,775	—
Sussex, West	342,831	19,668	—
Tyne and Wear	6,876	—	—
Warwickshire	220,667	10,480	—
Wiltshire	604,968	44,495	76,375
West Midlands	36,259	—	—
Yorkshire, South	203,282	3,358	—
Yorkshire, North	2,012,547	28,589	—
Yorkshire, West	312,772	2,526	—
England Total	26,449,137	635,359	1,405,338

Table B

Scheme	*Total expenditure (£'000s) 1993-94*	*1994-95*
ESA scheme	16,550	31,030
NSA scheme	[1]1,410	[2]1,500
F and CG scheme	[1]26,450	27,140
Pilot beef and sheep extensification	401	391
Woodland grant scheme	13,900	[2]15,000
Farm woodland premium scheme	635	[2]1,500
Orchard grubbing scheme	510	[2]nil
Optional five year set-aside scheme	20,685	14,100
Habitat scheme	—	[3]—
Moorland scheme	—	[4]—
Countryside access scheme	—	[3]—
Organic aid scheme	[5]—	800

[1] All figures are given by financial year except here which indicates calendar year.
[2] Estimate.
[3] First payment due in 1995-96.
[4] Not yet operational.
[5] Not operational.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total cost of the Farm Animal Welfare Council in each year since it was established.

Mr. Soames: Since the Farm Animal Welfare Council was established in July 1979, total costs in each financial year for which published figures are available are as follows:

	£
1979-80	45,000
1980-81	74,000
1981-82	112,000
1982-83	137,000
1983-84	145,000
1984-85	157,000
1985-86	178,000
1986-87	184,000
1987-88	172,000
1988-89	188,000
1989-90	235,000
1990-91	282,000
1991-92	289,000
1992-93	269,000

Birds of Prey

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what support the Government are giving for research into DNA identification of stolen birds of prey;

(2) what support the Government are giving to research and development in respect of registering birds of prey by feather samples as part of a DNA registration data base.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1987, my Department has been funding research at the University of Nottingham into the use of DNA fingerprinting techniques to establish the genetic variation in birds of prey. The Department expects to publish the report shortly.

In each of the bird of prey species that have so far been examined, DNA fingerprinting has proved capable of identifying individuals and their parentage. This has enabled captive breeding claims to be verified. The technique has already been used in criminal proceedings to identify individual birds that have been illegally taken from the wild or stolen from another keeper. There have been several convictions in cases where evidence from DNA tests was presented. The Government's priority is to

encourage the wider use of DNA tests to assist the police and others involved in enforcing the law on wildlife. The potential for other applications of DNA techniques will be kept under review, taking account of scientific progress and the availability of resources.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Voluntary Work

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to redraft the Social Security (Sickness and Invalidity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations to give effect to disregard of voluntary work undertaken for under 16 hours per week when assessing incapacity for work;

(2) what steps are being taken to implement the decision that people now on invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance who undertake voluntary work of less than 16 hours per week will not have their incapacity for work questioned.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to redraft the regulations.

It is not our intention that people should lose benefit solely because they do voluntary work of less than 16 hours, and this has been made clear in revised guidance which has been issued to staff dealing with claims.

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated costs to his Department of the provisions in the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill for the training linking rule; and how many people he estimates will use this rule to requalify *(a)* for incapacity benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: There is no reliable information on which to base an assessment of costs or the number of people who will take advantage of the training linking rule.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the Government's policy on the use of interest received on moneys held by the Child Support Agency; and whether this interest will be paid to parents caring for children.

Mr. Burt: As indicated in Mr. Hughes' letter to the hon. Member of 8 July, on behalf of Mrs. Hepplewhite, the Child Support Agency does not receive interest from the bank in respect of clients' funds temporarily held by the agency. Instead the agency's bank charges are abated. The administrative costs of attributing amounts of interest to individuals would be disproportionate to the typically small amounts of money involved. Clients of the agency benefit from the lower bank charges and the economy of effort through the consequent reduction in the agency's administrative costs, which is reflected in the level of the fees charged.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish comprehensive Child Support Agency literature incorporating the provisions in the February review.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 15 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Child Support Agency literature incorporating details of the effects on maintenance of the changes to legislation that were introduced in February.

The Child Support Agency published a new edition of its main leaflet for the general public called *for parents who live apart* at the end of June. This leaflet incorporates the legislative changes that were made to the Child Support system in February 1994.

In addition, whenever a maintenance assessment is completed by the Agency, the clients involved receive a leaflet called *your child maintenance assessment* which also incorporates details of the changes. A revised version of the comprehensive leaflet called *a guide to child support maintenance* will be published in due course.

I hope you will find this reply helpfu'.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether members of his Department have discussed legislation covering the Child Support Agency with Parliamentary Counsel in the last three months.

Mr. Burt: No.

Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was his estimate of the numbers of claimants expected to receive industrial injuries disablement benefit for chronic bronchitis and emphysema from (i) 13 September 1993 to March 1994 (ii) in 1994-95 and (iii) in 1995-96.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The original broad estimate was that there could be around 9,000 benefit awards for claims received during the initial 12-month take-on period ending in August 1994. The number of new awards in subsequent years was expected to be small.

National Insurance Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on encouraging enforced subject access to national insurance records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Department cannot be said to "encourage" enforced subject access requests. The number of subject access requests to the national insurance recording system of the type that have become known as enforced subject access requests is reported in the 10th report of the Data Protection Registrar, section 3(k). The Department shares the concern of the Data Protection Registrar about the nature of this type of request, but is legally obliged to process all subject access requests.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from the National Housing and Town Planning Council concerning student financial support; and what consideration he has given to allowing students to claim year-round housing benefit.

Mr. Hague: I received a copy of the report, "Making a difference: Housing Benefit for students", published by the National Housing and Town Planning council on 23 June 1993. Following publication, the NHTPC wrote to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), on two further occasions about the reinstatement of housing benefit to full-time students. In general, it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide for full-time students, and we have no plans to change this.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount paid in housing benefit for the last three years for which figures are available; what was the total Government spending on the housing benefit direct benefit subsidy during these years; and what is the implied percentage of total housing benefit paid by local authorities which is reimbursed by the central Government direct benefit subsidy.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

£ million

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Total housing benefit	4,942	5,997	7,604
Total direct subsidy	4,378	5,337	6,613
Percentage of total housing benefit expenditure met by direct subsidy	89	89	87

Source: Social Security Departmental Report—March 1994.

Note: Since 1990-91, the bulk of rent rebate subsidy in England and Wales has been paid by the Department of the Environment as part of the housing revenue account arrangements. These figures include elements of DoE rent rebate subsidy *net* of any housing revenue account surpluses that are used to offset these amounts.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for the last three years for which figures are available, what was the total amount of subsidy paid in benefit in respect of vulnerable groups under regulation 11 of the housing benefit regulations; and, for the same period, what was the total amount paid as a subsidy to local authorities.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1

Subsidy paid to local authorities for housing benefit expenditure on claimants protected by regulation 11 of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations

Year	£ million
1990-91	11·5
1991-92	14·5
1992-93	18·5

Source: Housing benefit final subsidy claim forms.

Notes:

1. The figures quoted represent subsidy paid to local authorities of rent allowance spending above the rent officer's reasonable market rent figure where benefit could not be restricted under the provisions of regulation 11. Local authorities are not required to record their total benefit expenditure on claimants protected by regulation 11.
2. Groups protected by regulation 11 include not only "vulnerable groups"—people aged over 60, incapable of work or with responsibility for children—but also those who were able to afford the accommodation when they first took it on and those who have recently been bereaved.

Table 2

Total housing benefit subsidy paid to local authorities

£ million

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Rent allowances	1,530	2,154	2,894
Rent rebates	2,848	3,183	3,719
Grand total	4,378	5,337	6,613

Source: Social Security departmental Report 1994.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by region for *(a)* February 1992-93, *(b)* February 1993-94 and *(c)* February 1994 to date, the total number of claimants for invalidity benefit who have been examined by a doctor from the Benefits Agency medical service in each region; how many of these claimants were subsequently found fit for work and their benefit disallowed; how many of those claimants whose benefit was disallowed appealed against the decision; and how many were successful.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 18 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking, for February 1992-93, February 1993-94 and February 1994 to date, about the total number of claimants for Invalidity Benefit who have been examined by a doctor from the Benefits Agency Medical Services in each region; how many were found fit for work and their benefit disallowed; how many subsequently appealed against the decision; and how many were successful.

The information regarding numbers of recipients of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) examined by a doctor from the Benefits Agency Medical Service (BAMS), (formerly the Regional Medical Service), in the periods requested and the outcomes of such medical examinations, is not available in the format requested. This is because the information relating to IVB is aggregated with other incapacity benefits. Similarly, statistics are not available relating to the numbers of cases found fit for work following examination by a BAMS doctor and who have their benefit disallowed by an Adjudication Officer (AO); and have appealed against the decision; and how many were successful. This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

BAMS provide an opinion on a customer's capacity for work. However, the decision on this question lies with the AO, the independent adjudication authority. The AO considers the BAMS report along with all other available evidence.

The information which is available relating to examination by doctors from BAMS is provided at Appendix 1.

This information is collated quarterly and therefore does not correspond exactly with the periods requested. Additionally, the statistics have only been maintained since 1 January 1993 and therefore no earlier information is available.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix 1

BA Medical services reference work
SB/IVB/SDA cases examined and where the opinion was capable of work

Reference office	*1 January 1993 to 31 March 1993*		*1 April 1993 to 30 June 1993*		*1 July 1993 to 30 September 1993*		*1 October 1993 to 31 December 1993*		*1 January 1994 to 31 March 1994*	
	Examined	*Found capable of work*[1]	*Examined*	*Found capable of work*[1]	*Examined*	*Found capable of work*[1]	*Examined*	*Found capable of work*[1]	*Examined*	*Found capable of work*[1]
Inverness	243	66	253	86	318	109	296	113	232	50
Aberdeen	174	38	318	102	267	62	266	63	219	65
Dundee	1,021	257	1,070	281	1,160	332	914	258	1,182	212
Glasgow	8,227	2,847	6,514	2,182	5,151	2,130	9,681	2,072	6,508	2,497
Edinburgh	1,038	470	1,209	617	2,777	1,124	2,170	810	1,597	664
Newcastle	6,632	2,650	6,484	2,841	7,943	3,409	6,392	2,815	6,497	2,702
Leeds	11,030	4,826	11,361	4,726	14,230	6,047	13,939	5,809	13,896	5,951
Bootle	6,288	2,335	[2]—	[2]—	7,702	2,750	20,372	2,463	7,645	2,761
Manchester	6,819	2,213	6,716	2,379	8,501	3,440	6,166	2,244	7,146	2,425
Nottingham	3,700	1,474	3,569	1,465	4,642	1,804	4,537	1,884	4,331	1,898
Birmingham	7,361	2,077	6,763	2,100	7,944	2,365	7,685	2,613	9,970	3,233
Wembley	6,493	2,577	5,264	1,869	6,429	2,831	6,043	2,827	8,527	3,725
Sutton	4,778	2,039	4,698	1,888	5,612	2,263	5,843	2,328	6,811	2,473
Bristol	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	5,844	2,501	3,473	1,401	4,139	1,699
Cardiff	8,147	2,861	9,016	3,375	6,373	2,468	8,005	2,322	8,352	2,523

[1] This column includes recipients who were considered either capable of following their own occupation or of undertaking suitable alternative work.
[2] Statistics not available.
[3] Bristol office not yet open. Statistics for Bristol are aggregated with Birmingham.

Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to introduce legislation to implement the proposals contained in the White Paper entitled "Security, Equality, Choice: The Future for Pensions".

Mr. Hague: We intend to introduce legislation at the first available opportunity.

Job Seekers Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to publish his proposals for a job seekers allowance to coincide with the Budget statement on 29 November.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 21 June at column *87*.

Disabled People (Rights)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation in the next parliamentary Session to improve the rights of people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: On 15 July, I issued a consultation document inviting comments by 7 October on a variety of proposals in five areas to combat discrimination against disabled people. A number of the proposals being considered would require legislation. Final decisions on the way forward will be taken in the light of the responses to the consultation document.

Bosnian Refugees (Benefit Assistance)

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of benefit assistance is given to Bosnian refugees on arrival in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: Bosnian refugees admitted to the United Kingdom who are not being looked after in reception centres are entitled to the full rate of income support subject to the normal rules of entitlement. People who seek asylum at a port of entry to the United Kingdom can receive income support at a reduced rate—90 per cent. of their appropriate personal allowance—while their application for refugee status is being processed by the relevant authorities. Both groups can receive housing benefit, which can meet up to 100 per cent. of reasonable housing costs, if they are liable to pay rent for their home.

SCOTLAND

Abortions

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many abortions were performed in Britain on women residents in each health board area in Scotland in each year since 1990; and how many of these were performed in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: The information on the number of abortions performed in England and Wales on Scottish residents does not differentiate between those carried out in NHS hospitals and those carried out in the private sector, and is not yet available for 1993. The information available is as follows:

1990

Health board of residence	*Scottish hospitals*		*Hospitals in England and Wales*
	Total	*NHS*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	723	711	122
Ayrshire and Arran	616	612	84
Borders	132	131	6
Dumfries and Galloway	238	217	34
Fife	771	767	16
Forth Valley	495	488	35
Grampian	1,195	1,140	14
Greater Glasgow	1,686	1,641	284
Highland	454	451	13
Lanarkshire	822	804	127
Lothian	1,862	1,836	32

Health board of residence	Scottish hospitals Total	Scottish hospitals NHS	Hospitals in England and Wales Total
Orkney	27	27	—
Shetland	31	31	1
Tayside	1,121	1,113	11
Western Isles	25	25	5
Scotland	10,198	9,994	784

1991

Health board of residence	Scottish hospitals Total	Scottish hospitals NHS	Hospitals in England and Wales Total
Argyll and Clyde	739	734	101
Ayrshire and Arran	663	657	65
Borders	179	178	5
Dumfries and Galloway	244	238	26
Fife	816	811	11
Forth Valley	507	502	32
Grampian	1,327	1,270	19
Greater Glasgow	1,892	1,837	258
Highland	431	425	12
Lanarkshire	895	880	134
Lothian	2,112	2,093	32
Orkney	24	24	—
Shetland	23	22	1
Tayside	1,168	1,163	13
Western Isles	26	25	3
Scotland	11,046	10,859	712

1992

Health board of residence	Scottish hospitals Total	Scottish hospitals NHS	Hospitals in England and Wales Total
Argyll and Clyde	645	639	67
Ayrshire and Arran	677	673	51
Borders	181	181	5
Dumfries and Galloway	251	246	28
Fife	755	753	13
Forth Valley	530	521	23
Grampian	1,282	1,235	18
Greater Glasgow	1,953	1,918	193
Highland	433	429	15
Lanarkshire	903	887	116
Lothian	2,007	2,000	30
Orkney	39	39	0
Shetland	33	32	0
Tayside	1,071	1,067	13
Western Isles	31	31	1
Scotland	10,791	10,651	573

1993[1]

Health board of residence	Scottish hospitals Total	Scottish hospitals NHS
Argyll and Clyde	600	593
Ayrshire and Arran	671	668
Borders	164	164
Dumfries and Galloway	216	214
Fife	759	757
Forth Valley	491	484
Grampian	1,349	1,303
Greater Glasgow	2,126	2,100
Highland	452	450
Lanarkshire	905	895
Lothian	2,084	2,075
Orkney	28	28
Shetland	48	48
Tayside	1,089	1,080
Western Isles	19	19
Scotland	11,001	10,878

[1] Provisional.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the change in the rate of incidence of melanomas from 1984 to 1994;

(2) what survey of skin cancer has been conducted through general practitioners; and what consultation he has had about the results with the Association of Dermatologists.

Mr. Stewart: Registrations of malignant melanomas in Scotland for the years 1993 and 1994 are not yet complete. The most recent 10-year period for which information is available is 1982-92. The incidence rate for men rose from 3·17 per 100,000 in 1982 to 6·2 per 100,000 in 1992. The comparable figures for women were 5·11 per 100,000 and 8·29 per 100,000.

I am not aware of any survey of skin cancer conducted through general practitioners. This is, however, an area of increasing concern which has been brought to GPs' attention by the Chief Medical Officer of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. There has been considerable research into the subject by individuals and groups, often with GPs' co-operation, and the Scottish Dermatological Society and the British Association of Dermatologists (UK) are no doubt aware of the results.

Secure Hospital Places

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons are currently in prison because there is no place available in a secure hospital; and what steps he is taking to resolve this problem;

(2) if he will publish the result of his inquiry into the imprisonment of persons for whom no place could be found in a secure hospital.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested by the hon. Member cannot be compiled in time before the House rises. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House for the benefit of other hon. Members.

Dangerous Plants

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the conclusions of the latest research available to him on the potential dangers of humans coming into contact with Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed; if he intends to fund further research; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will place a specific duty on river purification boards and water authorities to eradicate Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed from the banks and verges of rivers, reservoirs and lochs;

(3) what powers he has to ensure that Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed is eradicated from

places to which the public have access or are likely to have access; what powers and duties local authorities have in this regard; what are the duties and responsibilities of landowners in relation to its eradication; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will bring forward legislation to give local authorities and/or landowners a duty to eradicate Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed from places to which the public have access; and if he will make a statement;

(5) how many cases were recorded in each of the past five years of people requiring medical treatment after coming into contact with Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The effect of Humans coming into contact with the sap of Heracleum Mantegazzianum or Giant Hogweed may require medical treatment from a GP or hospital but data are not available on the numbers of people requiring such treatment. Nor has my right hon. Friend been informed of research into any potential dangers from contact with this plant.

There is no specific statutory duty placed on any individual or body to eradicate Giant Hogweed from public places. Private landowners are free to do so and district councils have adequate powers under the nuisance provision of the Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897 where they consider that a public nuisance exists from Giant Hogweed. There are no plans to bring forward legislation imposing new duties of this kind on local authorities or landowners.

Multiple Births

Mr. Wrigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets and *(e)* sextuplets were born in Scotland in each year from 1990 to 1993; what was the total number of maternities in Scotland in each year; and how many multiple births of each type in each year were conceived as a result of (i) in-vitro fertilisation, (ii) gamete intra-fallopian transfer and (iii) other forms of assisted conception.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* The information available is set out in the table:

Type of birth	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Twins:				
2 live	711	682	790	751
1 live, 1 stillbirth	15	22	11	25
2 stillbirth	5	5	6	4
Triplets:				
3 live	14	18	15	10
2 live, 1 stillbirth	2	4	—	—
1 live, 2 stillbirth	—	2	—	—
3 stillbirth	—	—	—	—
Quadruplets:				
4 live	1	1	—	—
3 live, 1 stillbirth	—	1	—	—
Quintuplets	—	—	—	—
Sextuplets	—	—	—	—
Maternities	65,556	66,630	65,307	62,946

Information on the number of multiple births in Scotland attributed to assisted conception is not available. Some information on these matters is published in the first annual report of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, and in earlier annual reports of the interim licensing authority, copies of which are available in the Library.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at what date Her Majesty's Government decided to set up separate inquiries in Scotland and Northern Ireland into the proposed electricity interconnector; and how this decision was reached.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend appointed a reporter to take a public inquiry to consider Scottish Power's application for the Scottish part of the proposed interconnector with Northern Ireland, and the objections to it, and to report to him. He understands that the reporter subsequently arranged that the public inquiry should start in Ayr on 4 October. Consideration of the application from Northern Ireland Electricity for that part of the interconnector which is proposed in Northern Ireland is not a matter for my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the Ove Arup report on the proposed Scotland-to-Northern Ireland electricity interconnector; and if he will consider postponing the public inquiry into the matter of the interconnector until copies of this report have been made available to the objectors and the reporter.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has not seen the Ove Arup report on the proposed electricity interconnector with Northern Ireland.

Conflicts of Interest

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions employees of Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Enterprise or the Forestry Authority have declared that there might be a potential conflict of interest between their work for their agency and any outside private interest or business.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Glasgow-Barrow Air Service

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the performance criteria on which the subsidy payable to Loganair/British Airways Express for the Glasgow-Barra service is dependent; what weight is given to the number of advertised scheduled flights actually completed between Glasgow and Barra; and what steps he is taking to monitor performance in this service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* Subsidy is payable in arrears for the lifeline air service operated between Glasgow and Tiree and Barra based on the deficit incurred in providing the service designated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In addition, the service must be operated in accordance with the requirements of the Civil Aviation Authority regulatory regime.

Under the terms of the contract, the operator is required to submit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State details of each occasion on which the company fails to operate the air service with an explanation for each failure. The performance of the service is continuously monitored and reviewed with the company concerned.

Children Bill

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will present a children's Bill for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* We are making preparations for children's legislation and will introduce it when parliamentary time permits. The Government's decisions on future legislation will be announced in the Queen's Speech.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to the implications of the forest fires in south-west Scotland for the dispersal of radioactive waste in the area; and if he will now commission a further report on the subject.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* There is no evidence to suggest that radionuclides are concentrated within the forest biomass and hence it is not believed that forest fires will affect the dispersal of radionuclides within south-west Scotland. There is no intention to commission further work on this topic.

DEFENCE

Aldershot Hospitals

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans regarding the Louise Margaret and the Cambridge hospitals in Aldershot.

Mr. Hanley: As part of "Front Line First", we propose to reorganise the service hospital base in the United Kingdom around one hospital at Haslar in Gosport. This would involve the closure of the Cambridge military hospital, including the Louise Margaret maternity wing, in Aldershot. Our proposals for the defence medical services are outlined in a consultative document, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Training

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will *(a)* list the foreign Governments assisted with training and *(b)* the amount forgone as listed in "Other Notes" on page 19 of the Appropriation Accounts of 1992-93, class 1, vote 1.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to disclose this information as details of military assistance are in confidence between the coutries involved.

Gifts

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the recipients of gifts and their amounts listed in "Special Payments" on page 28 of the Appropriation Accounts 1992-93, class 1, vote 2.

Mr. Hanley: Details of gifts made in 1992-93 by my Department, their value, and the identity of recipients are as follows:

Number	*Description*	*Value* £	*Recipient*
3	Bell, Nameboard, Honours Board ex-HMS Ariadne	375·00	Scunthorpe Borough Council
1	Bell—ex HMS Minerva	200·00	City of Salford
1	Bell—ex RMAS Invergordon	60·00	Town of Invergordon
1	Bell—ex HMS Osiris	60·00	Ilkley Parish Council
1	Bell—ex HMS Charybdis	300·00	Island of Guernsey
2	Nameboards—ex HMS Jupiter	100·00	TS Jupiter
1	TON Class MCM Instructional Equipment	725·00	The Bronington Trust
1	Deck Plate—ex HMS Minerva	30·00	Ist Battalion Scots Guards
1	MK 28 Mine Shell	12·00	New Tavern Fort Project
67	Ship's Crests, Badges and Associated Items	335·00	The Sea Cadet Corps
4	Mines/Sinkers	100·00	Royal Naval Museum—(for display on HMS Minerva)
1	Unmarked Ship's Bell	150·00	Parishes of East Meon and Langrish
1	Bell—ex HMS Sirius	300·00	City of Portsmouth
1	All-Purpose Firestreak Missile and Cradle Trolley	9·00	Yorkshire Air Museum
1	WESSEX	250·00	State of Guernsey
1	Land Rover	360·00	RHKR(V) Museum

Number	Description	Value £	Recipient
1	Armoured Vehicles	1,600·00	Canadians
1	Heavy Ferry	20,000·00	RE Museum
1	TACR 11	4,500·00	Imperial War Museum
1	Jet Provost Aircraft	8,750·00	RAF Museum
1	Vulcan Cannon Pod	180·00	RAF Museum
1	Quantity 70 × L39A1 Rifles	700·00	Army Rifle Association
1	Searchlights	300·00	RE and Army Museum
1	Aircraft Components	250·00	Bedford College
1	Admiral's Barge	12,000·00	Portsmouth Property Base
1	Quantity 2 × Cat 5 Viking Gliders	1,500·00	RAFGSA
1	Ship's Bells	5,060·00	Local Authorities
1	Quantity 70 × LMG's Machine Guns	7,000·00	Nepal
1	1992 NRA BISLEY Meeting Civilian Usage of 7·62mm Ammunition	78,620·00	National Rifle Association Bisley
101		143,826·00	

Contractors

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the contractor paid the extra-contractual amount listed under "Special Payments" on page 19 of the Appropriation Accounts 1992-93, class 1, vote 1.

Mr. Hanley: It is not MOD policy to identify individual contractors where matters of commercial confidentiality are concerned.

Car Purchases

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many other Departments use the car purchase running contract drawn up by his Department; and how many vehicles were purchased through this scheme in the last year.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 25 other Departments and public bodies use the Ministry of Defence enabling contract arrangements. The total number of vehicles procured against the contracts in financial year 1993-94 was approximately 2,900.

Civilian Employees

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances conviction for a violent offence for which a prison sentence has been served debars an applicant from civilian employment with the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Aitken: A person who has been found guilty of an offence against the law is not necessarily debarred from employment with my Department. Each case is considered on its merits, taking into account the nature and date of the offence, the candidate's age at the time, and the type of work for which he or she is applying.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which countries anti-personnel mines with self-destruct or self-neutralising mechanisms have been exported from the United Kingdom since 1982.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the established practice of successive administrations not to release information about individual defence exports. Nevertheless, in this case and in the context of the recent UN resolution on anti-personnel mines, I can confirm that no AP mines have been exported from the United Kingdom for well over a decade.

Official Service Residences

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *341-42*, if he will provide a breakdown of *(a)* the maintenance, furniture and equipment costs for each residence, *(b)* the subject matter of each contract of more than £5,000 for each residence and *(c)* the annual cost for domestic and household staff for each residence.

Mr. Hanley: For security reasons it is not our practice to reveal the location of individual residences for senior officers. The maintenance, furniture and equipment, and domestic and household staff costs for the 77 official service residences are shown in the table, with residences being identified numerically. Information on the nature of each contract of more than £5,000 for each residence is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

£ thousand

Residence	Combined figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 except where indicated: Maintenance	Furniture and equipment	Based on 1994-95 rates of pay: Annual domestic and household staff costs
1	7·0	2·0	84·3
2	5·0	1·2	9·4
3	2·0	1·2	32·2
4	2·5	3·0	36·3
5	63·0	16·0	157·7
6	37·5	8·0	61·6
7	56·5	11·0	84·3
8	10·0	3·0	0
9	63·0	2·5	173·2
10	30·0	6·5	42·8
11	86·0	24·0	117·7
12	27·0	2·9	87·2
13	200·0	12·0	78·0
14	3·6	1·0	42·8
15	41·7	2·3	42·8
16	9·0	0	51·8
17	7·0	3·0	99·8
18	57·0	9·7	84·3
19	80·7	24·0	142·2
20	18·0	3·0	44·7
21	14·4	4·8	142·2
22	49·0	55·0	81·3
23	25·0	4·0	61·8
24	35·0	8·5	173·2
25	14·6	5·0	39·5
26	69·0	8·0	65·8
27	37·5	10·1	139·3
28	[1]66·6	8·5	52·0
29	15·0	15·3	76·0
30	25·5	10·1	66·8
31	22·3	14·1	83·0
32	61·5	8·0	30·2
33	13·0	3·6	23·4
34	13·7	7·7	37·6
35	22·5	9·0	9·6
36	50·4	3·4	55·7
37	23·4	0	72·6
38	29·3	3·2	58·4
39	39·2	3·1	50·9
40	23·6	0·2	50·9
41	38·3	8·2	35·0
42	83·3	18·8	83·9
43	61·7	27·3	95·3
44	26·1	14·7	50·9
45	25·0	2·2	69·5
46	49·2	14·0	71·3
47	80·7	29·9	84·3
48	19·9	9·3	49·1
49	35·9	5·0	42·2
50	21·4	27·3	53·6
51	24·6	11·6	41·5
52	82·0	5·0	71·2
53	213·9	1·1	36·6
54	[2]29·0	0	99·9
55	563·0	140·0	102·4
56	0	2·3	52·3
57	87·4	4·6	121·1
58	19·9	4·4	62·5
59	108·8	19·7	80·9
60	0	0	88·6
61	10·6	4·6	63·5
62	0	0	18·0
63	[3]15·1	[3]4·3	4·0
64	[3]267·4	1·2	37·6
65	48·8	2·6	51·6
66	90·1	3·2	55·8
67	88·1	4·4	72·5
68	38·1	3·1	45·3
69	11·3	4·1	22·7
70	23·2	9·5	26·5
71	396·0	1·5	72·5
72	0	0	26·5
73	[3]4·8	3·6	51·6
74	102·9	1·5	37·6
75	11·2	4·8	49·3
76	93·7	2·0	45·3
77	96·4	5·9	74·6
Total	4,324·7	719·6	4,990·3

[1] Charges over a five-year period.
[2] FYs 1990-94.
[3] FY 1993-94.

Mr. Gordon McNally

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1990 Ministers, officials or serving officers at the rank of major or above have met Mr. Gordon McNally and discussed military equipment.

Mr. Aitken: I am not aware of any meetings which may have taken place between Ministers, officials or serving officers and Mr. McNally.

Arms Sales (Abu Dhabi)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to sell a type 23 frigate to Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Aitken: The purchase of a type 23 frigate from a United Kingdom yard is one of a number of possibilities being considered by the United Arab Emirates.

MOD Police

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the report of the Blelloch inquiry into the Ministry of Defence police is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *760-61*.

EMPLOYMENT

Race Relations Employment Advisory Service

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Government have to market test the race relations employment advisory service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The race relations employment advisory service is included in the Employment Department's market testing programme for 1994-95.

Actively Seeking Work Test

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many decisions, disallowances and warning letters have been issued to unemployment benefit

and income support claimants by adjudication officers, in respect of the definition of actively seeking work, in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on the number of decisions and disallowances issued to unemployment benefit claimants in respect of the definition of actively seeking work is contained in the quarterly summary entitled "Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions", copies of which are held in the Library. This information is available from 1 October 1989, when the actively seeking work condition was introduced, to the year ending March 1994. My Department does not hold information about the number of decisions and disallowances issued to income support claimants on those grounds.

The number of warning letters which have been issued to unemployment benefit and income support claimants, in respect of the definition of actively seeking work, in each full year since 1 October 1989 is shown in the following table:

Annex A

	Number of actively seeking employment warning letters issued
1 October 1989 to December 1989	7,577
January to December 1990	44,793
January to December 1991	24,896
January to December 1992	24,636
January to December 1993	10,869
January to March 1994	2,230

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 50 years who are living within the Greater London area and are registered as unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe: In April 1994, the latest month for which figures are available, unadjusted claimant unemployment amongst people aged 50 and over in the greater London region stood at 49,664 men and 16,087 women.

Breast Feeding

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice he gives to employers about arrangements for encouraging mothers to continue breast feeding on their return to work after maternity leave; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: None. Arrangements for women who wish to continue breast feeding on their return to work are best agreed between the individual women themselves and their employers.

School Leavers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of summer-term school leavers had *(a)* obtained employment, *(b)* started vocational training and *(c)* started courses of further or higher education by the following October in 1978 and in each year since then.

Miss Widdecombe: The information in the table has been taken from the youth cohort study of England and Wales. The youth cohort study started in 1985 and has surveyed young people reaching minimum school leaving age approximately every two years since then.

Main activity status[1] of 16-year-olds[2] in the October after leaving school[3]

Per cent.

	In a full time job (over 30 hours a week)	*On a training scheme e.g. youth training*	*College of further education (or tertiary college) full time[4]*
October 1984	24·0	39·0	20·0
October 1985	23·0	37·0	20·0
October 1986	26·0	39·0	21·0
October 1988	31·0	36·0	25·0
October 1990	28·0	23·0	34·0
October 1991	22·0	19·0	42·0

Source: Youth Cohoht Study.

[1] Main activity status identifies whether young people are out of work, in a full time job (over 30 hours a week), on a training scheme, full time at school or sixth form college, at a college of further education (or tertiary college) full time or doing something else.

[2] Aged 16 at preceding 31 August.

[3] Figures for October 1984 and October 1985 covered pupils in state schools only; independent schools were included from 1987 onwards.

[4] Excluding those young people who remain in school or sixth form college.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to increase the maximum awards which may be made to successful applicants by industrial tribunals.

Miss Widdecombe: Awards in cases of sex or race discrimination are not subject to an upper limit. We are considering the outcome of the annual review of the limits on other awards and will announce the decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now increase the financial resources available to industrial tribunals.

Miss Widdecombe: We have already done so. The financial resources allocated to industrial tribunals for 1994-95 have been increased over those for last year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the minimum, maximum and average waiting times for *(a)* unfair dismissal, *(b)* redundancy rights, *(c)* maternity rights, *(d)* race discrimination and *(e)* other claims in (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales; and what were the waiting times in 1979, 1989 and 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: No information is available for 1979 and information for 1989 and 1993 is not available in the form requested. The figures for 1989 and 1993, all jurisdiction, are shown in the following table:

Length of time for registered applications to come to first hearing

Percentage under (weeks)

	12	*20*	*26*	*30*	*36*
England and Wales[1]					
1989-90	44	75	85	n/a	n/a
1993-94	14	38	54	63	75

	12	20	26	30	36
Scotland					
1989-90	43	85	91	n/a	n/a
1993-94	5	65	80	86	91

[1] Separate figures are not available for Wales.

Regional Expenditure

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been his Department's expenditure in each region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment, Germany

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *406*, if he will now provide figures giving the percentage rate of unemployment in the united Germany.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* Internationally comparable ILO based unemployment figures are not available for unified Germany. However, in June 1994, unadjusted registered unemployment in unified Germany stood at 3,594,590. No equivalent rate of unemployment is available.

TRANSPORT

Rail Privatisation

5. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring his Department is doing of the railway privatisation fees being paid to consultants.

Mr. Freeman: Officials closely monitor the government's rail privatisation consultancy expenditure to ensure value for money in accordance with government accounting and financial procedures. The consultancy expenditure of BR and Railtrack is a matter for them.

West Coast Main Line

7. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the west coast main line reinvestment project under the private finance initiative.

15. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the west coast main line reinvestment project under the private finance initiative.

Mr. Freeman: In March, Railtrack appointed a private sector consortium—West Coast Main Line Development Company Ltd.—to work with it to produce design standards for the line and to recommend funding options for the project. The joint study is expected to be completed by the end of the year. A further competition will then be held for the contract to undertake the upgrading work. That contract is expected to be let in mid-1995 and the works will start as soon as possible thereafter.

East Coast Main Line

12. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with local authorities in the north-east of Scotland relating to proposals for involving them in the completion of the electrification of the east coast main line beyond Edinburgh.

Mr. Freeman: A local group—CREATE, campaign for rail electrification Aberdeen to Edinburgh—comprising local and district councils, trades councils and chambers of commerce, is due to release a report by the end of July in conjunction with Scotrail, on the feasibility of the electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

European Union

13. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what actions he has taken to date to follow-up the recommendations in Lord Donaldson's report in relation to the European Union.

Mr. Norris: We have identified a number of recommendations, particularly those on improving port state control, transponders, provision of salvage tugs and funding, which we wish to pursue with our European partners. Copies of the report were circulated to EU Transport and Environment Ministers in May and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised those issues at the European Transport Council meeting in Luxembourg last month. We are greatly encouraged by the initial response from our European colleagues and we shall be taking these matters forward with them.

Road Signs

16. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the conclusion of his review of road signing for commerce and tourism.

Mr. Key: On tourism, I had hoped to introduce a new regime this summer. We have been working with the Department of National Heritage on the introduction of a more flexible system for tourist signing. We have also consulted the local authority associations. I hope that the industry will be able to agree to the introduction of my proposals in good time for next year's season. I have already consulted the industry on the introduction of more flexible commercial signing and expect to issue guidelines later this year.

Staff Annual Reports

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the 1992-93 annual staff report markings broken down by grade 6 to AA, including typist and support grades, by gender.

Mr. Norris: According to the Department's computerised staff record, annual staff report markings for grade 6 to AA administrative staff in the Department of Transport, including its agencies, were as attached. Figures for typist and support grades are not broken down so as to ensure that individual members of staff cannot be identified.

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Total
G6 *Male*	2	16	3	0	0	21
G6 *Female*	0	0	0	0	0	0
G7 *Male*	10	103	81	1	0	195
G7 *Female*	7	27	10	0	0	44
SEO *Male*	4	111	82	2	0	199
SEO *Female*	1	29	20	0	0	50
HEO *Male*	9	223	207	8	0	447
HEO *Female*	9	116	92	1	1	219
EO *Male*	8	258	307	7	1	581
EO *Female*	9	307	295	3	0	614
AO *Male*	10	377	509	11	3	910
AO *Female*	25	851	1,049	16	1	1,942
AA *Male*	16	215	311	10	3	555
AA *Female*	44	804	955	16	2	1,821
Typist Grades *Male*	0	0	2	0	0	2
Typist Grades *Female*	30	270	211	3	0	514
Support Grades *Male*	3	47	98	2	0	150
Support Grades *Female*	0	37	79	0	0	116
Total *Male*	62	1,350	1,600	41	7	3,060
Total *Female*	125	2,441	2,711	39	4	5,320

Runway Capacity

17. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to make a statement on the recommendations of the RUCATSE report on runway capacity in the south-east.

Mr. Norris: We expect to make a statement giving the Government's response to RUCATSE some time before the end of the year.

24. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding the building of a second runway at Gatwick airport.

Mr. Norris: The RUCATSE working group considered a number of possible locations for additional runway capacity to serve the south-east. After the group published its report in July 1993, a period of public consultation was announced. That consultation period ended on 31 May this year. In response to that consultation, my Department has received some 350 responses from organisations and some 4,100 letters from the public, of which some 2,860 referred specifically to the option of runway development at Gatwick.

Low Cost Public Transport

19. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase facilities for low cost public transport within the south-east of England over the next five years.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's policies of deregulation, privatisation and competition will ensure greater efficiency and better value for money in the provision of public transport services. The package approach will make it easier for local authorities to fund improvements in public transport facilities.

Heavy Vehicles

20. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the comparative effects on the environment of 44 and 38-tonne lorries.

Mr. Key: As my right hon. Friend replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) on 21 March *Official Report*, column *10*, we see a positive advantage in the use of 44-tonne lorries for combined road-rail transport. That means fewer lorries and it transfers freight from road to rail and so benefits the environment.

Bus Services

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the elimination of competition in bus services following bus company mergers/takeovers since the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Freeman: The bus industry is dynamic and changing. The spur competition and privatisation has reduced it costs and made it more responsive to the market. Recent developments may well lead to efficiency gains; it is important to maintain a healthy level of competition, which is why all qualifying mergers are considered for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Freight

25. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage freight to be moved by rail rather than by road in and around Surrey.

Mr. Freeman: We are encouraging rail freight in a number of ways. We have liberalised access to the rail network, facilitated the restructuring of BR's freight businesses before sale, improved the freight facilities grants scheme, introduced a new track access grant for marginal freight flows and raised the maximum gross vehicle weight limit to 44 tonnes for combined road/rail transport.

Commuter Rail Services

26. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what obligations exist upon Network SouthEast and InterCity to co-ordinate passenger services in the event of the failure of a particular train to run on the lines serving commuters in Essex.

Mr. Freeman: We expect operators of services to co-operate in the event of breakdowns to ensure that passengers are not left stranded. It is not, however, always practicable to stop the first InterCity train which follows a breakdown on a commuter service.

Cycling

27. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to encourage bicyling.

Mr. Key: We are continuing our work to make roads safer for cyclists and to give guidance to local authorities and others in making good provision for cycling. The package approach which we have introduced for local transport expenditure gives local authorities greater flexibility to allocate funds for cycling. We are also seeking co-operative initiatives with outside bodies to improve understanding of the value of cycling and to promote changes in conditions that will allow it to flourish. Copies of the Government's recent statement are in the Library.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with his colleagues at the Departments of Health, for Education and of the Environment about encouraging children to bicycle to school, in order to reduce pollution and congestion, while encouraging health.

Mr. Key: We recognise the potential to reduce pollution and congestion, if more people were to choose to cycle. Our recent statement on cycling policy emphasises the importance of changing perceptions of cycling and improving conditions for it. I have not discussed with colleagues encouraging children to cycle to school. It is primarily a matter for parents to judge whether cycling to school is a safe and reasonable option, given local circumstances, and to press for improved facilities should those be necessary. Ways of improving health, including through cycling, have been discussed by Ministers of the Departments mentioned as part of the "Health of the Nation" initiative.

London Buses

28. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the privatisation of London Buses.

Mr. Norris: The privatisation of London Buses Ltd. is now well under way. There is strong competition among bidders for the 10 operating companies and London Transport is on track to complete the sales by the end of the year.

Motorways

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of wire rope central reservation barrier have now been provided *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* on the M4; and how many additional miles have been planned.

Mr. Key: Some 196·5 miles of wire rope safety fencing has been installed in the central reserve of dual carriageways at 74 different locations throughout the United Kingdom's road network. Included in this total is the 16·5 miles of wire rope safety fencing on the M4 motorway. Because the wire rope and the traditional tensioned corrugated beam safety fences are normally included in highway contracts as equivalent alternative vehicle restraint systems, and are therefore subject to competitive tendering procedures, I am unable to say how many additional miles of wire rope safety fencing have been planned.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column 772, what estimate he has made of the likely increase in motorway capacity that the use of variable speed limits, electronic sensors and message signs might produce.

Mr. Key: None; additional throughput is one of the potential benefits that will be assessed during the 12-month period of operation of the pilot scheme. Reports have been received of additional capacity of 5 to 10 per cent. on similar systems already in use on the continent, but evidence to support those reports has yet to be produced.

Channel Tunnel

23. **Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to an alternative route for the channel tunnel rail link through Barking under Barking Reach.

Mr. Freeman: Since the rail link's easterly approach to London was selected in 1991, Union Railways has considered various alignments through Barking, both on the surface and in tunnel, crossing Barking Reach and following the existing railway corridor. In consecutive reports to the Government, of March and October 1993, Union Railways presented a surface routeing along the existing London, Tilbury and Southend line, with the alternative of a tunnel following the same alignment. After careful consideration, my right hon. Friend concluded that the surface routeing should be chosen.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what year he expects both direct freight and direct passenger services through the channel tunnel from starting points in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Freeman: The timing and routes for services through the channel tunnel are a matter for European Passenger Services and British Rail, who are responsible for providing them.

A259

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about improvements to the A259 between Hastings and Dymchurch.

Mr. Key: There are a number of schemes in the road programme for comprehensively improving the whole of the south coast trunk route including the section of the A259 between Hastings and Dymchurch. The schemes are at various stages of development.

A public consultation was held last year for the A259 Guestling Thorn and Icklesham bypass but this proved inconclusive. No clear view emerged on the best scheme to take forward in this unique landscape. However, the Government remain committed to improving the A27/A259 route and we must look for a solution for this length. We have therefore decided to hold a scheme planning conference. Although we are still looking in some detail at the lessons from the recent trials at Hereford and Bodmin, we are sufficiently confident in the outcome there to believe that a conference will help at Guestling Thorn and Icklesham. To avoid limiting options, the conference will cover the area from Guestling Thorn and Winchelsea to east of Rye. The necessary arrangements will now be put in hand and a detailed announcement will be made in due course.

Draft proposals have been published for three schemes for the improvement of the A259 between New Romney and Dymchurch and a public inquiry will be held to consider the proposals and objections to them later this year. We also have plans for bypasses of Bexhill and Hastings. Following public consultation, a preferred route for the Bexhill and Hastings western bypass was announced in December 1990 and for the Hastings eastern bypass in June 1991. Detailed design work is under way, with a view to publishing draft statutory orders for these schemes later this year.

The Minch (Tankers)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *268*, what appropriate action has been taken with the owners of tankers transiting the Minch against the recommendations agreed internationally since November 1993.

Mr. Norris: The Department has written to the owners of the seven contravening tankers. Their responses have been positive, with the result that the owners of six of the vessels involved have issued an instruction to avoid the Minch and none of the seven has since transited the Minch.

Road Schemes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the cost-benefit analysis 9 framework statement for each road scheme costing over £1 million that has been approved by his Department and that is *(a)* currently under construction or *(b)* scheduled for construction.

Mr. Key: The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Private Detective Firms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown of the bill for services supplied by Bray's Detective Agency for gathering information on protestors at Twyford Down.

Mr. Key: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 18 July 1994:

I have been asked to respond to your recent Parliamentary Question requesting a breakdown of the cost of employing Bray's Detective Agency (Southampton) to gather evidence of trespass on the M3 construction site near Winchester.

The information is as follows:

	£
Collection and processing of evidence	204,490·70
Travel and subsistence expenses	4,536·30
Equipment and other expenses	5,229·10
VAT	37,400·27
Total	251,656·37

Benzene (Environmental Effects)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the natural occurrence of benzene in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Most benzene emissions are man made and it is widely distributed as a trace atmospheric constituent over urban and industrial regions of north-west Europe. Concentrations of benzene in the atmosphere show daily and seasonal cycles resulting from emission activities and chemistry occurring in the atmosphere.

Rural benzene measurements have been made in Oxfordshire at the Harwell laboratory since about 1986. Average concentrations at this rural site are about 0·8 ppb. Measurements made by the university of East Anglia at a rural site in Norfolk show a similar mean concentration to that observed at the Harwell site, whereas measurements at a remote rural site in Cumbria exhibited mean benzene concentrations of 0·4 ppb.

Measurements have been made in the remote northern hemisphere troposphere and in the southern hemisphere troposphere. Benzene concentrations were found to be 0·07 ppb in the northern hemisphere and less than 0·02 ppb in the southern hemisphere. Those figures, collected in the remote background atmosphere, give a sign of what may be described at the level of natural occurrence of benzene.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has made of the genotoxic nature of benzene in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Efficiency Cuts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the basis on which he has proposed efficiency cuts to *(a)* the Coastguard Agency and *(b)* the Marine Safety Agency.

Mr. Norris: No decisions have yet been taken about the basis for efficiency gains in either agency.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information was provided to his Department by British Nuclear Fuels in connection with the recent air shipment of plutonium-based mixed oxide nuclear fuel assemblies to Switzerland; and what information he has received on future plans to fly plutonium from United Kingdom airports to foreign customers.

Mr. Norris: The Department was given advance notification of the shipment. No details of any future similar shipments have been received.

Marine Safety Agency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what additional work arising out of the Donaldson inquiry he expects to be undertaken by the Marine Safety Agency.

Mr. Norris: The Government are examining all the recommendations of the Donaldson report. Many of those

will require further analysis or development, some of which will have to be undertaken by the Marine Safety Agency. The extent and nature of that work will be announced in the Government's detailed response to the report later this year.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade for each of the last five years the number of substantive staff employed by the Marine Safety Agency and its predecessors.

Mr. Norris: It is not possible to give a breakdown of the numbers of staff by grades employed for each of the last five years by the predecessor of the Marine Safety Agency, the surveyor general's office. The total staff complement of the SGO for each of the last five years was as follows:

	Numbers
1 April 1989	398
1 April 1990	361
1 April 1991	361
1 April 1992	347
1 April 1993	356

Vehicle Excise Discs

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *521*, (1) what estimates have been made by the DVLA of the total number and value of vehicle excise discs that will have to be stored on car dealers' premises in any one year if the AFRL scheme is fully implemented across the country;

(2) what constitutes a secure environment for vehicle excise discs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The hon. Member can be assured that the position of the Exchequer has been safeguarded in the security arrangements made, which include storage in appropriate safes. It would compromise the measures taken if I were to provide full details, just as it would to draw attention to the number and value of the discs to be held.

Pay Awards

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when staff in his Department are due to receive their 1994 pay awards; when staff employed in the Driving Standards Agency and the Vehicle Inspectorate are due to receive their 1994 pay awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The pay of staff in most parts of the Department of Transport is negotiated centrally. The 1994 pay award to staff in grades represented by the Civil and Public Services Association has been agreed and will be paid at the end of August. The settlement for staff in grades represented by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants is expected shortly. The two other main groups of staff have a later settlement date. Performance pay increases are handled separately.

Three of the Department's agencies—the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Driving Standards Agency and the Vehicle Inspectorate—bargain on pay directly with staff representatives. Pay negotiations between the DVLA and the unions are at an advanced stage. DSA and VI intend commencing negotiations shortly. Once settlement is reached all three agencies will implement their pay awards without delay.

Trains

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of trains travelling between London and Plymouth have arrived *(a)* on time, *(b)* within five minutes and *(c)* within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time in each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: The following figures are for the London to the west of England service group as a whole. Figures for London to Plymouth alone are not available. Services arriving within 15 minutes are not measured. Services arriving within 10 minutes of the scheduled time have been included instead.

Per cent.

Year	*On time*	*Within 5 minutes*	*Within 10 minutes*
1991	62·6	75·6	83·1
1992	61·2	75·3	83·8
1993	61·9	75·1	83·9

Coastguards

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years the number of substantive coastguard grades employed by his Department.

Mr. Norris: The attached table gives a breakdown for the last five years of the number of substantive coastguard grades.

Numbers of coastguard grades

Grade	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Coastguard Officer	385	390	385	377	381
Station Officer	57	50	49	56	48
District Officer	26	24	24	25	26
Inspector	7	7	7	10	10
Principal Inspector	8	8	8	8	7
Chief Coastguard	1	1	1	1	1
Totals	[1]484	[1]480	[1]474	[1]477	[2]473

[1] As at 31 December.
[2] As at 14 July 1994.

Staff (Assaults)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list by grade and location the number of staff in his Department who have been disciplined for assault on either another member of staff or a member of the public over each of the last 10 years;

(2) if he will list for the last 10 years, by grade, the number of staff in his Department disciplined for assault and the disciplinary penalty imposed for each case;

(3) if he will list for the last 10 years by grade the number of staff of his Department or its agencies dismissed for assault.

Mr. Norris: Information held centrally by the Department relates only to the past five years. There have been two cases in that period, both occurring in 1991. To give further details of grade and location might enable the individuals to be identified. The penalties imposed in those cases were respectively dismissal and a severe reprimand. In the former case, the officer decided to resign before being dismissed. Information relating to earlier years is held on individual personnel files and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what factors have led to the Driving Standards Agency considering reintroducing the nine test day;

(2) under what authority the Driving Standards Agency undertakes pay negotiations;

(3) if he will list for each of the last five years the number of substantive driving examiners employed by the Driving Standards Agency;

(4) if he will list the reasons for the cancellation of the block booking facility for LGV/PCV and motor cycle driving tests;

(5) when the Vehicle Inspectorate intends to enter into negotiations with trade unions regarding their 1994 pay claim;

(6) what considerations underlay the exclusion of the Driving Standards Agency from the national civil service pay settlement.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of these questions has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Ford, and I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from G. Lobo to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 13 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to the questions you have raised about DSA's operations. I am replying as Dr. Ford is on annual leave.

PQ 2919/93/94

You asked what factors led to the Driving Standards Agency considering re-introducing the nine test day.

At the recent Scottish Driving Examiners' Conference, some driving examiners suggested that the 3.35 pm test, the last one, should not be programmed in winter in some areas as it was often conducted in artificial (street) lighting. This in effect would reduce the current 8-day test day to a 7-test one during winter. In discussion, the Chief Executive made the point that there might be a case for considering this—subject to extra tests lost during winter being added to the summer programme. This could have the advantage of switching staff resources to be more in line with the seasonal pattern of test demand.

PQ 2924/93/94

You asked under what authority the Driving Standards Agency undertakes pay negotiations.

Authority for the Agency to undertake pay bargaining was given, with effect from 1 April 1994, under a delegated instrument issued by the Treasury in accordance with the Civil Service (Managemment Functions) Act 1992. The Civil Service Unions were consulted, in draft, on the delegation instrument.

PQ 2931/93/94

You asked for the number of substantive driving examiners employed by the Driving Standards Agency in the last five years.

The figures, as requested, at at 31 March for each year are as follows:

	Number
1990	1,245
1991	1,196
1992	1,109
1993	1,036
1994	969

PQ 2936/93/94

You asked the reasons for ending the block-booking arrangement for LGV/PCV and motorcycle tests.

Please refer to the answer which the Chief Executive gave to you in his letter of 8 June.

PQ 2940/93/94

You asked when the Agency intends to enter into negotiations with trade unions about their 1994 pay claim.

We intend to commence negotiations soon.

PQ 2924/93/94

You asked why the Agency had been excluded from the national Civil Service pay settlement.

The Citizen's Charter White Paper and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement on Civil Service pay (July 1991) set out the Government's view that wherever possible and within essential public expenditure controls, responsibility for pay and related conditions fo service should be delegated to agencies. The Government's view is that management decisions are best taken by those responsible for the delivery of the service, within robust strategic controls. Delegation of pay bargaining enables decisions to be taken by the Agency managers, rather than the officials in Whitehall. Those decisions better reflect an agency's particular circumstances. As one of the larger Agencies, delegation on pay bargaining was given to this Agency with effect from 1 April 1994.

Sick Absences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each agency in his Department what sick absence regime is operated.

Mr. Norris: In the Central Transport Group and in the Highways Agency, Transport Research Laboratory, Vehicle Certification Agency, Driving Standards Agency, Marine Safety Agency and Coastguard Agency, responsibility for managing sickness absence is delegated to line managers, who take action in respect of any unjustified absence. Where staff have reached a high level of sick absence, defined as more than 14 days in 12 months, managers are expected to implement measures to control absence which parallel those for dealing with poor work performance.

In the Vehicle Inspectorate, line managers are expected to register concern informally when a total of eight days is reached and to give an oral warning if 14 day's absence is reached. The Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency allows line managers discretion in determining which cases require formal action but it uses a trigger point of 10 days' absence for considering initial action.

Rail Dispute

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will invite the Confederation of British Industry and Trades Union Congress to nominate one representative each to serve on a three-man board as mediators, that he will nominate one independant chairman, and that such a board shall begin work immediately to try and solve the dispute between Railtrack and the RMT trade union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is for the parties to the dispute to take action to resolve it. The conciliation service of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service remain at their disposal.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Official Files

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department by what authority Her Majesty's Government can change the status of an official file once it has been opened for inspection at the Public Record Office, subsequently withdraw it and seek its retention.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Public Records Act 1958, as amended in 1967, makes no provision for any change in the acess status of a public record which has become legally available for public inspection in the Public Record Office under the provisions of that Act.

TRANSPORT

Severn Bridge

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the results of the survey that he commissioned into the extent to which heavy vehicles are diverting through Gloucester to avoid paying tolls to cross the Severn bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have now received the report and am publishing a summary of the findings today. It shows that although on average some 2,700 more vehicles than might be expected—allowing for traffic growth—travel west through Gloucestershire each day, only 1,500 of these can be positively identified as avoiding the bridge tolls. As the extra traffic is fairly evenly spread over the M50 and the three other main diversion routes and also evenly spread over 24 hours, it amounts to no more than one extra vehicle every seven or eight minutes on each route.

Nevertheless, I shall now be inviting representatives of Gloucester and Gwent county councils to meet me to discuss the findings.

Seat Belts

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to encourage the fitting of seat belts on minibuses and coaches.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have now completed their analysis of the case for compulsory fitment of seat belts on minibuses and coaches and are today publishing the report of their review. A copy is being placed in the Library of the House. This demonstrates the strength of the case for compulsory fitment as a standard for all European manufacturers.

I am formally requesting the European Commission to set the shortest possible timetable to require seat belts on all new minibuses and coaches. This reinforces my call for action at the Transport Council in Luxembourg in June.

I have also decided to seek the Commission's agreement for the United Kingdom Government to act ahead of the European Union to ensure that all minibuses and coaches are fitted with belts when specifically used for the transport of children. We will consult widely on how best to implement such a provision in practice; once we have the Commission's agreement.

I shall also be amending the Public Service Vehicle (Carrying Capacity) Regulations to ensure that, where belts are fitted, three children can no longer share a double seat.

Meanwhile, we will be encouraging manufacturers and operators to fit belts in response to customer demand. Virtually all new minibuses now coming off the production lines have seat belts fitted.

For existing vehicles, the Department of Transport has set standards on the retro-fitting of belts and has urged operators to take action wherever possible, and this they are now doing. There has been support from the insurance industry for the Department's action.

Highways Agency

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received proposals for organisational change from the Highways Agency.

Mr. Key: I am pleased to announce that wide-ranging proposals for restructuring the agency to achieve greater efficiency have been published today by Lawrie Haynes, the chief executive. I have arranged for copies of a leaflet explaining the proposals to be placed in the Library of the House.

London Transport

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to appoint a successor to Sir Wilfrid Newton as chairman of London Transport.

Mr. MacGregor: I have today appointed Mr. Peter Ford as chairman of London Transport for a five-year period from 15 September 1994, following the retirement of Sir Wilfrid Newton.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from members of the public about the impact of the channel tunnel rail link on the people of Barking.

Mr. Freeman: Since the January announcement of the final route of the rail link, my right hon. Friend and I have received some nine letters from members of the public affected by the surface route through Barking.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has received on *(a)* the feasibility and *(b)* the additional cost of routeing the channel tunnel rail link under Barking reach.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I have not received detailed advice on the feasibility or additional cost of routeing the rail link under Barking reach. Union Railways's general view is that such a tunnel would affect the major east Thames corridor development site there, passing beneath or near the Ford plant, the new Barking power station and the A13 extension. It might also require a new route to be devised for the rail link all the way to

Stratford, affecting many more properties than the current alignment, which closely follows the existing railway corridor.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trains currently use the track proposed to be used for the channel tunnel rail link through Barking between the hours of *(a)* 8 am to noon, *(b)* noon to 4 pm, *(c)* 4 pm to 8 pm and *(d)* 8 pm to midnight; and what he expects the figures will be after the rail link is in operation.

Mr. Freeman: The number of trains currently using the existing railway corridor between Barking and Purfleet is as follows:

	Passenger	*Other*	*Total*
(a) 8 am to noon	20	6	26
(b) noon to 4 pm	17	4	21
(c) 4 pm to 8 pm	25	3	28
(d) 8 pm to midnight	14	9	23

The number of trains likely to be using the railway corridor in the future, including after the rail link opens, will be a commercial matter for the railway operators involved.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties there are in the Barking constituency where the boundary of the property is directly adjacent to the rail track boundaries for the proposed channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways calculates that, on the south side of the route of the rail link as it runs through Barking on the surface, some 185 residential properties would be directly adjacent to the rail link track. On the north side of the route, some 136 residential properties would be directly adjacent to Railtrack track.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the smallest distance between the rear of any domestic house in the Barking constituency and the rail track for the proposed channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways calculates that, on the south side of the route of the rail link as it runs through Barking on the surface, the shortest distance between the rear of a house and the rail link track would be about 6·5 m. In general the shortest distance is between 7 and 8 m.

On the north side of the route, houses would be closer to Railtrack's track than to that of the rail link. The shortest distance between the rear of a house and the Railtrack track would be 2·5 m—though, again, this is exceptional. In general the shortest distance is about 10 m.

Driving Tests

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *702*, if he will list all the driving test centres that were identified by the Driving Standards Agency regional staff against the criteria marked A to D.

Mr. Key: No.

Staff Appraisal

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *47*, if he will make a statement on the reasons for the percentage of male and female typists receiving box 1 and box 2 markings; and if he will make a statement on the accuracy of the present reporting system.

Mr. Norris: Male and female typists are awarded appraisal markings by their line managers based on their judgment of their work performance. All reporting officers are required to certify that they have worked through the Department's material on staff reporting which gives detailed guidance on reporting standards.

Romney House Records Service

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which edition of the *Official Journal* of the European Communities contained the advertisement for the Romney House records service market test; and if it asked contractors to submit bids for call-off contracts.

Mr. Norris: The Department placed a notice in the *Official Journal* dated 17 September 1993. The notice invited expressions of interest from firms to provide a range of record services. The notice did not set out terms of contract or invite bids. An invitation to tender for a call-off contract is to be issued shortly.

Road Accidents (Pedestrians)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults have been (i) killed and (ii) seriously or (iii) slightly injured on or near pedestrian crossings in (i) the Metropolitan police area of London and (ii) England and Wales in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Key: The information requested is shown in the table.

Child and adult casualties, by severity on or near pedestrian crossings in England and Wales: 1991-93

Casualties

	On Crossing	*[3]Within Zig-Zag*	*[4]Within 50 metres*
1991			
Child[1]			
Fatal	7	1	7
Serious	236	36	241
Slight	967	119	797
Adult[2]			
Fatal	118	19	86
Serious	758	129	669
Slight	2,141	212	1,862
1992			
Child[1]			
Fatal	11	3	8
Serious	272	32	240
Slight	978	117	798
Adult[2]			
Fatal	82	11	95
Serious	744	112	677
Slight	2,047	232	1,814
1993			
Child[1]			
Fatal	7	1	6
Serious	217	31	197
Slight	902	109	734
Adult[2]			
Fatal	84	13	67
Serious	687	99	612
Slight	2,003	206	1,716

[1]Aged 0-15.
[2]Aged 16+.
[3]Casualties approaching and exiting crossing within zig-zag lines.
[4]Casualties elsewhere within 50 metres of crossing.

Charter Payments

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been paid out by way of charter payments to those travelling on each of the regions' railway networks in each of the last two years.

Mr. Freeman: Charter payments disaggregated by region are not available. Charter payments by each of the three rail businesses for the periods requested are as follows:

	1992-93 £	*1993-94* £
Season ticket discounts		
InterCity	34,000	241,000
Network SouthEast	53,000	2,063,000
Regional Railways	0	134,000
TOTAL	87,000	2,438,000
Compensation		
InterCity	1,387,000	N/a
Network SouthEast	283,000	N/a
Regional Railways	175,000	N/a
TOTAL	1,845,000	2,300,000
TOTAL	1,900,000	4,700,000

Note: A breakdown for 1993-94 compensation payments by the three rail businesses is not yet available.

Health Screening

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department is giving to cutting its health screening programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department is reviewing the effort currently deployed on health screening as part of its efficiency gains programme.

Civil Service Lifeboat Appeal

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future commitment of his Department to the civil service lifeboat appeal.

Mr. Norris: The Department is reviewing the effort currently deployed on administrative support for the civil service lifeboat fund appeal in the Department as part of the efficiency gains programme.

Railway Bridges

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* bridges and *(b)* culverts British Rail (i) repaired and (ii) replaced in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and how many Railtrack will repair or replace in 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally. It would therefore involve a disproportionate cost to provide an answer to this question.

Rail Strike

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much fare income had been lost by British Rail as a result of the signal staff strike on 15 July 1994; and how much compensation was owed to British Rail by Railtrack at this date.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail estimates that it loses of the order of £9 million per day in revenue for each one-day strike. Questions of compensation as a result of strike action are a matter for BR and Railtrack.

Railway Investment

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail invested in *(a)* rolling stock, *(b)* track and signalling, maintenance and repair and *(c)* track and signalling renewal and new-build schemes in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

£m 1993-94 prices:

	1992-93	*1993-94*
Rolling stock[1]	402	295
Track and signalling maintenance and repair[2]	625	525
Track and signalling renewals and new build schemes	410	393

[1] Excludes prepayments by European Passenger Services of £124 million in 1992-93 and £144 million in 1993-94.
[2] Excludes electrification/other infrastructure investment.

Rail Finance

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is British Rail's provisional external financing limit for 1994-95; and what plans he has to change it;

(2) what is Railtrack's provisional external financing limit for 1994-95; and what plans he has to change it.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional negative EFLs for 1994-95 for Railtrack and British Rail are, respectively, £280 million and £348 million. They will be kept under review during the course of the year, and adjusted as necessary.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is British Rail's provisional public service obligation grant for 1994-95; and what plans he has to change it.

Mr. Freeman: Support for BR's passenger services, including compensation for the costs of public obligations, in 1994-95 is being paid by the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising. Provision of £1,675 million has been made in class VI vote 7. My right hon. Friend has made no proposals to change it. In addition to this grant payable direct to BR, there is additional provision for metropolitan railway grants to be paid to passenger transport authorities.

Rolling Stock Leasing

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much *(a)* British Rail and *(b)* the three rolling stock leasing companies will invest in new rolling stock in 1994-95;

(2) what is Railtrack's investment budget for maintaining and improving the railway infrastructure in 1994-95; and what proportion of this budget it expects to invest in the course of the year.

Mr. Freeman: BR plans to invest over £250 million in rolling stock in 1994-95 of which around 40 per cent. will be on passenger vehicles that will pass to the rolling stock leasing companies. European Passenger Services Ltd. is planning to invest up to £150 million in rolling stock. Railtrack plans to spend around £500 million on improving and maintaining the railway infrastructure. Investment decisions and priorities within these total figures are a matter for the industries concerned.

Cars (Running Costs)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average cost to the motorist per mile of running a typical family saloon car in 1979 and in each year since then (i) in cash terms and (ii) at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Key: Data for 1979 to 1993 are contained in the attached table. I regret that data for 1994 are not yet available.

Motoring running costs—1979-1993

Year	*Costs per mile (pence, current prices)*	*Costs per mile (pence, 1993 prices)*
1979	5	15
1980	8	17
1981	9	17
1982	10	18
1983	11	18
1984	11	17
1985	12	18
1986	11	16
1987	12	16
1988	12	16
1989	13	16
1990	15	16
1991	15	16
1992	16	16
1993	17	17

Source: National Travel Survey, Transport Statistics Great Britain, Family Expenditure Survey.

Notes:

1. Figures relate to running costs only and take no account of depreciation.
2. Running costs based on the average of all non-company cars.
3. Fuel costs in this series rose by 28 per cent. between 1979 and 1980.
4. Costs at current prices are deflated by the Retail Price Index (all items) to obtain costs at 1993 prices.
5. Data for 1993 are provisional.

Blood Donor Scheme

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future commitment of his Department to the blood donor scheme.

Mr. Norris: The Department is reviewing the effort currently deployed on administrative support for the blood donor scheme in the Department as part of the efficiency gains programme.

Staff (Running Costs)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the staff running costs budget set for his Department in April 1993.

Mr. MacGregor: The budget set for my Department's staff running costs in April 1993 for the financial year 1993-94 was £277·95 million. This includes staff running costs for executive agencies in the net controlled area and the Vehicle Inspectorate, which is a trading fund.

Unstaffed Stations

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with representatives of British Rail Network SouthEast and Railtrack plc concerning the implications for the safety of passengers of having stations unattended by the staff of either company; which stations are currently unattended while trains are running at any time of the day; and what plans there are to alter this arrangement in respect of any station.

Mr. Freeman: Station staffing is a matter for the BR train operating units and Railtrack. Information about which stations are unattended whilst trains are running is not readily available. A list of staffed and unstaffed stations in the operational area of Network SouthEast was placed in the Library of the House pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) of 14 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *508*.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many former employees of the BREL carriage works in York have died of asbestos-related diseases since 1964; how many have received compensation from British Rail; what was the average length of time from the date at which compensation was sought to the date it was paid; what was the average cash amount of compensation awarded; and what plans his Department has to improve the speed with which British Rail settles these claims and the level of compensation paid.

Mr. Freeman: The statistical information requested in the question is not readily available. I understand from British Rail that claims are dealt with, and compensation is determined, in accordance with established legal and commercial principles. Claims are processed as quickly as possible but, given that the episodes giving rise to such claims are likely to have occurred some 30 or 40 years before hand, the task of investigating in order to establish the relevant facts is time consuming, for both claimant and employer alike.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Norris: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support

across the country. The Department's aim of a more efficient, safe and environmentally friendly transport system, using the market to offer the widest possible choice of transport users, will assist businesses of all sizes.

My Department is, like others, systematically reviewing the regulations for which it is responsible to ensure that the unnecessary or over-burdensome regulation is cut back. When considering new regulations, we take particular account of the burden and cost those regulations impose on small business. As part of the business link initiative, we are also considering whether the existing channels of communication can be improved between the Department, its executive agencies and the business sector.

Passengers Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications of the extension of timetabled journey times by British Rail for the operation of the passengers charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that it has periodically found it necessary to adjust timetables to accommodate factors such as engineering works and speed restrictions. Such adjustments are not designed to make it easier for BR to meet its passengers charter standards, which are from time to time made more demanding.

Car Registration

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 13 June, *Official Report*, column *521*, what encouragement is being given to car dealers to join the automatic first registration and licensing scheme.

Mr. Key: Trade associations which have co-operated with the Department on the development of the scheme report enthusiasm for it among their members and anticipate a high take-up rate. A number of manufacturers are keen to become involved. Press releases and articles on the initial pilot under way in Bristol will be issued and further publicity will coincide with the extension of the scheme nationwide early next year.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to close the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Key: There are no plans to close the Driving Standards Agency.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations underlie the closure of part of the Driving Standards Agency public counter service.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. John Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from G. A. Lobo to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 18 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to the question you raised about the considerations that led to the closure of part of the Driving Standards Agency public counter service. As Dr. Ford is on annual leave I am replying on his behalf.

The use of public counters has declined in recent years. Each of the present 8 counters now deals with an average of only 50 applications a week—compared with a total weekly average of more than 33,000 applications. This facility is a very expensive way of receiving test applications, and the introduction of credit card bookings for Large Goods Vehicle and Passenger Carrying Vehicle driving tests from October, to facilitate booking of those tests at short notice, will reduce the use of counter services even further.

Public counters at Cambridge and Edinburgh were closed in October 1993 and March 1994 respectively.

The present public counters will be closed next October.

Nuclear Fuel Transport

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what communications he has received from Railtrack in regard to the derailment of a wagon carrying a nuclear fuel transport flask at Hartlepool nuclear power plant on 6 July;

(2) what information he has received from Nuclear Electric or British Rail in regard to the derailment of a wagon carrying a nuclear fuel transport flask at Hartlepool nuclear power station on 6 July; and whether he has instituted an investigation into the incident;

(3) what information he has received from the nuclear installations inspectorate on Health and Safety Executive regarding the derailment of a wagon carrying a nuclear fuel transport flast at Hartlepool nuclear station sidings on 6 July; and if he will make it his policy to investigate the incident.

Mr. Freeman: The Department received notification of the incident from Railtrack, Nuclear Electric and the Health and Safety Executive. It was reported that track damage was minor; there was slight damage to the wagon, but no damage to the empty flasks which were being carried and that there were no radiological safety consequences to workers or members of the public. The Health and Safety Executive nuclear installations inspectorate and railways inspectorate are conducting inquiries as part of their normal response to such incidents.

Trunk Roads (Report)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the report from the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment before the summer recess.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 20 May 1994, *Official Report*, column *599*.

Union Railways

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current position and policy of Union Railways's attitude towards buying residential properties in West Thurrock and Purfleet.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways will, if requested, purchase homes within the area safeguarded for the new channel tunnel rail link, on the same basis as if they were being acquired under a compulsory purchase order. For homes beyond the safeguarded zone, a separate discretionary purchase scheme operates. This applies in cases of hardship where the property is expected to be seriously affected by, most importantly, operational noise above the proposed threshold for the noise insulation regulations for new railway lines.

Woolwich Rail Tunnel

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the current situation regarding the proposed Woolwich rail tunnel.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* A feasibility study, led by London Transport, has been undertaken on the Woolwich rail crossing. It has been agreed that the results justify a fuller appraisal of engineering and economic issues, including financing options. This will be undertaken by Railtrack, London Transport, London Docklands development corporation and British Rail.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the performance of the compound hyperform in helping reduce exhaust emissions.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* None.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many *(a)* oral and *(b)* written questions have been tabled during the present Parliament; and what is his estimated total cost of the replies.

Mr. Newton: In the current Parliament up to and including Friday 15 July, 11,153 oral and 92,414 written questions have appeared on the Order Paper. These figures do not include questions for oral answer which were unsuccessful in the shuffle or questions which were withdrawn before the day on which they were to be asked. Using the latest estimated costs of £225 for answering an oral question and £97 for answering a written one—*Official Report,* 30 November 1993, column *387,*—the total cost of answering these questions is estimated at £11,473,583. These costs do not include printing and publishing costs or the work of the Table Office in processing the questions.

TREASURY

Rugby Union

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the known earnings of rugby union players has on the private club status of rugby union clubs with regard to the payment of income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue has confirmed that any earnings of rugby union players have no effect on the private club status of rugby union clubs with regard to the payment of income tax.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reason the Inland Revenue has taken aerial photographs of crowds at certain rugby union grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue has not taken any aerial photographs of crowds at any rugby union grounds.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report,* column *378* (1) how many rugby union clubs are paying employers' national insurance contributions in respect of earnings or financial rewards received by players;

(2) if payments of income tax and national insurance contributions from earnings through playing rugby union are now being received.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* The Inland Revenue's special compliance office has started investigations into rugby union clubs. These investigations are continuing and at this stage is not appropriate to comment further.

Water Companies

Mr. Booth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been paid in corporation tax in each year after privatisation by the privatised water companies in England.

Mr. Dorrell: Corporation tax paid by privatised water companies in England is as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	70
1991-92	115
1992-93	125
1993-94	110

Note: Figures rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Staff Pensions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the public sector accounts for pension costs and for the change in potential pension liabilities for *(a)* civil servants in Departments and *(b)* executive agency staff.

Mr. Dorrell: Staff in Departments and executive agencies are members of the principal civil service pension scheme. Although the scheme is unfunded, employers meet on an accruals basis the cost of pension cover provided for their staff by the payment of accruing superannuation liability charges. These payments are appropriated in aid of the treasury civil superannuation vote; class XVII, vote 3. The level of the charge reflects actuarial assessment by the Government Actuary of the payments that need to be made to finance the liabilities of the scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of pensions paid to former Treasury staff in real terms in 1965, 1975, 1985 and the most recent year; and what is the estimated cost in 1995 and 2000.

Mr. Dorrell: Staff of the Treasury are members of the principal civil service pension scheme which is the occupational pension arrangement for civil servants. The Treasury meets, on an accruals basis, the emerging pension costs of the staff it employs. Pension payments to former Treasury staff, including surviving spouses, are estimated at £21·75 million for 1993-94. Information relating to previous and future years is not readily available.

Football Pools

Sir David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the betting duty on football pools companies once the national lottery has been introduced.

Sir John Cope: There are no plans to reduce the rate of pool betting duty upon the introduction of the national lottery. The rate of duty on the national lottery was included in the Finance Act 1993 in the light of many factors including the rate of pool betting duty.

Incomes (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of households in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* Yorkshire and Humberside have incomes of (i) £10,000 per annum or less, (ii) £20,000 per annum or less, (iii) £64,000 per annum or less and (iv) £100,000 per annum or less.

Mr. Nelson: Information for *(a)* and *(b)* are not available. Estimates for *(c)*, the Yorkshire and Humberside region, from the 1992 family expenditure survey are:

Proportion of households with gross income of:

(i)—£10,000 per annum or less—40 per cent.
(ii)—£20,000 per annum or less—69 per cent.
(iii)—£64,000 per annum or less—99 per cent.
(iv)—£100,000 per annum or less—not available.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to Her Majesty's Treasury if personal allowances were increased by *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000, *(c)* £3,000 and *(d)* £5,000 for all people aged over (i) 70 and (ii) 75 years for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates of the Exchequer costs in a full year at 1994-95 income levels are given below:

£ million

	Increase in allowance of	*Cost of increase in personal allowances for people aged 70 years or over*	*75 years or over*
(a)	£1,000	340	190
(b)	£2,000	600	340
(c)	£3,000	820	460
(d)	£5,000	1,130	640

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the upper percentage limit on pay increases in the public sector consistent with the Government's public sector pay policy.

Mr. Portillo: The approach to public sector pay is that increases should be met from existing budgets and should be paid for by greater efficiency or other savings. Settlements should reflect the particular circumstances of individual groups.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination in financial services.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The Treasury contributed to its preparation. I would encourage everyone with an interest in services to disabled people, including financial services, to respond to the consultation paper.

ECOFIN

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent Council meeting of European Economic and Finance Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Brussels on 11 July.

In the morning, the Council discussed, in open session, the work programme for the German presidency. I emphasised that the main task of the EU was to establish the conditions to reinforce the recovery of the European economy and thus create the new jobs that Europe needs to get unemployment down. This required the convergence of economic policies to restore healthy public finances and to keep inflation low. I also emphasised the importance that the United Kingdom attaches to effective action to tackle fraud against the Community budget.

The Council adopted the broad economic guidelines for the economic policies of the Community and the member states which had been approved by the European Council at Corfu on the basis of the text agreed by ECOFIN on 6 June.

The Council agreed in principle to a loan of up to 130 million ecu for Slovakia, to be disbursed in two equal tranches. Disbursement of the second tranche would be subject to further Council agreement.

The Council adopted a set of detailed conclusions on the Commission's 1993 report on fraud, its strategic programme and 1994 work programme. Conclusions were also adopted, at United Kingdom initiative, on the procedure for examining special reports of the Court of Auditors to ensure that effective follow-up action is taken on the issues raised.

There was a general discussion of a proposed withholding tax—taxation of savings—from which no conclusions were drawn. I emphasised the United Kingdom's strong opposition to a tax of this sort. The presidency said that ECOFIN would return to the matter on 27 July.

The Council agreed to hold an orientation debate on 27 July on a VAT definitive system. There was a brief presentation from the Commission on the taxation of small and medium-sized enterprises, of which the Council took note.

No formal votes were taken in the Council meeting.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the average annual tax saving enjoyed by a typical investor in a £6,000 personal equity plan;

(2) what was the revenue cost of the capital gains tax concessions on personal equity plans in each of the last three years;

(3) what was the revenue cost of the tax concession on dividends in personal equity plans in each of the last three years.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates of the income tax revenue costs are in the table. The average annual tax saving for a typical investor with a £6,000 PEP cannot be estimated, nor can a reliable estimate be made of the cost of tax relief on capital gains.

Estimated total cost of income tax relief

	£ million
1991-92	90
1992-93	120
1993-94	[1]140

[1] Provisional.

Civil Service (Severance Costs)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to assist Departments with the costs of early retirement, redundancy and severance from the civil service.

Mr. Portillo: The Government propose to finance from the Treasury's civil superannuation vote 80 per cent. of the costs of early departures paid by the Paymaster General and currently recharged in full to Departments, to cover those eligible people leaving the civil service between 1 October 1994 and 31 March 1997.

Parliamentary approval for this expenditure will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for HM Treasury's civil superannuation vote; class XVII, vote 3. Pending that approval, any urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Tax Accountants

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to take forward the consultations on the Inland Revenue's power to call for the papers of a tax accountant.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government have arranged for an independent inquiry into the Inland Revenue's power to request accountants' papers. Mr. Philip Ely, a former president of the Law Society, has been appointed for this purpose, and representations are invited in an Inland Revenue press release issued today.

Taxation (Self-employed)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the initiative the Inland Revenue is taking in north-west England to apply PAYE to self-employed construction and plant-hire operators; and what plans he has to extend this to other areas.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* There is no special initiative to apply PAYE to self-employed construction and plant-hire operators in north-west England. The Inland Revenue has reviewed the employment status of a number of individuals taken on by plant-hire operators in north-west England. This is to ensure that taxpayers are treated consistently in line with the Inland Revenue's commitment under the taxpayers charter. There are no plans for special initiatives in other areas. However, employment status will continue to be reviewed, where necessary, as part of the Inland Revenue's normal compliance activity.

PRIME MINISTER

Railtrack

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 7 July, to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), *Official Report,* column 447, what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the payment of £500 to members of the Railtrack board for attendance at a board meeting.

The Prime Minister: All Railtrack board payments were agreed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and by the Treasury before Railtrack was established. No additional payments have been introduced since that time.

Non-executive directors of Railtrack receive a £500 fee for each meeting of one of the board's committees—safety, environment and health; audit; and remuneration—which they attend as a member. Each committee meets up to four times a year, and no non-executive director is a member of more than two. They receive a separate annual fee of £10,000 for their main board duties.

These payments are consistent with the Treasury guidelines on nationalised industry board members' appointments, pay and bonuses.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to establish a pre-legislative committee or working group to consider the findings of the consultation on disability issues.

The Prime Minister: Decisions on the way forward will be made in the light of the responses to the consultation document "Disability on the Agenda", issued on 16 July.

Debt Relief

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he has had with *(a)* European leaders and *(b)* Commonwealth leaders about (i) the Trinidad terms and (ii) Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I announced in the House on 11 July 1994, *Official Report,* column 668, that the Naples summit had agreed to pursue additional measures aimed at increasing the level of debt relief for the poorest countries in line with the initiative that I originally proposed four years ago. We have consistently pressed for the implementation of full Trinidad terms in contacts with European, Commonwealth and other Governments. We regularly discuss Kashmir with our European Union

partners, and with the Indian and Pakistan Governments who are the Commonwealth Governments most directly concerned.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from the Secretary General of the Arab League about the Arab League's resolutions on Lockerbie and the destruction of Pan Am 103.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary General of the Arab League handed a copy of the Arab League resolution concerning the Lockerbie bombing to Her Majesty's ambassador in Cairo on 31 March this year.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *483*, how many overseas visits he has made as Prime Minister during which he undertook fund-raising activities for the Conservative party.

The Prime Minister: Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of my official duties.

European Council

Mr. Channon: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the special European Council held in Brussels on 15 July.

The Prime Minister: A special meeting of the European Council was held in Brussels on 15 July to consider the presidency of the European Commission and certain international questions. I attended with my right hon. Friend, the Foreign Secretary and with my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Following his consultations with Council members over the previous two weeks, the President of the European Council, Chancellor Kohl, proposed that the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Mr. Jacques Santer, should take over as the President of the European Commission on 7 January 1995.

All members of the Council endorsed this proposal. During a short discussion, I underlined the challenges facing the European Union in the period ahead, including making the single market and the need to extend prosperity and security to the east. I believed that Mr. Santer was well qualified to lead the European Commission during this period. He will have an important role to play in bringing together different points of view.

In accordance with article 158 of the treaty on European Union, the Council President will now consult the European Parliament on the nomination of Mr. Santer.

After a report by the Italian Prime Minister on the Naples summit, the Council discussed the former Yugoslavia. My right hon. Friend reported on the visit which he had paid earlier in the week to the region with the French Foreign Minister. Heads of Government expressed their support for the contact group's plan. They believed that everything possible should be done to secure its acceptance and avoid a yet more dangerous situation.

The French Prime Minister briefed the Council on the action taken by his Government in Rwanda. In the light of the grave humanitarian situation there, the Council asked the Commission to bring forward proposals for additional aid from the European Union.

Finally, the Council discussed the Baltic states and Ukraine. The European Union is seeking to develop its relationships with those countries; to work for the withdrawal of the last Russian troops from the Baltic States; and to help Ukraine to develop a new energy strategy, including closure of the nuclear power plants at Chernobyl.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Population and Reproductive Health

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries he intends to increase population and reproductive health programmes in the next five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are aiming to achieve increases over the next two years and more in some or all of the following countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, the Gambia, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Cambodia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Peru. Achieving this aim will depend on agreeing, with the countries and institutions concerned, proposals that we judge to be sufficiently likely to succeed in their objectives.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the percentage of their aid budgets that is spent by each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries on population and reproductive health.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the OECD's 1993 development assistance committee chairman's report, a copy of which will be placed in the House Library, for details of the percentages of each member state's aid budget spent on population and health. The most recent information from the OECD and the United Nations Population Fund indicates that in 1991 average OECD expenditure on population as a percentage of overall development assistance was about 1·3 per cent. The United Kingdom figure was just under 1·5 per cent.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the World bank that more should be spent on population and reproductive health measures; and what has been the result of those representations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Through the development committee and the World bank board, United Kingdom

representatives have urged that further attention should be given by the bank to population and reproductive health. This approach has been endorsed by both bodies. World bank funding of this work is increasing and it is producing a sector review of population in developing countries.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, he will make it clear that Her Majesty's Government's policy is that when, how many or whether to have children is a decision for women and men to make freely without coercion.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We believe that women and men should be able to access the information, commodities and services that they need to reduce the likelihood of conception and thus have children by choice, not chance. They should be free to decide whether to use contraceptive measures, and which to use, without coercion of any kind. Our delegation to the United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo will emphasise these elements of Government policy.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the European Union's aid budget is spent on population and reproductive health measures.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At present, less than 1 per cent. of the European Community aid budget is spent on population and reproductive health measures. Between 1991 and 1993, the EC provided 58 mecu—£45 million[1]—for population and reproductive health measures, mostly in South Asia and Mediterranean countries. Financing of some 27 mecu—£21 million[1]—is planned for 1994.

[1] Conversion rate for July 1994: 1 ecu=£0·7817.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Britain's bilateral aid budget was devoted to population and reproductive health activities in 1979 and each of the past five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of bilateral net official development assistance devoted to population and reproductive health programmes

	Per cent.
1979	0·31
1989	0·30
1990	0·97
1991	0·89
1992	0·93
1993	1·48

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the World Health Organisation that more should be spent on population and reproductive health measures; and what has been the result of those representations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Decisions about the allocation of the World Health Organisation's regular budget are made by successive world health assemblies, by means of resolutions that are based on recommendations of the executive board. Through participation in the executive board's working group on WHO's response to global change, British officials encourage WHO to propose plans of work that reflect global priorities—including the need to improve reproductive health.

The United Kingdom is the single largest donor to the co-sponsored United Nations programme of human reproduction research, administered by WHO. This contribution and active role in the HRP's policy and co-ordination committee has enabled us to influence the intensity and focus of this programme's research.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United Nations Development Programme about the rate of progress in implementing reconstruction projects in north-west Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to press UNOSOM and other multilateral agencies to pursue sustainable programmes of assistance in the north-west. But their ability to do so is dependent on the existence of a secure environment, stability and a planning framework which sets clear priorities and mechanisms for accountability.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Ethiopia about Sudanese refugees and their humanitarian needs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to recent reports there are some 50,000 Sudanese refugees in three camps in Ethiopia, a number that has not substantially changed over the last three years. The camps are managed by the Ethiopian administrator for refugee affairs, are largely financed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and are in receipt of food aid supplied by the World Food Programme.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest information from the World Food Programme about the extent of humanitarian need in southern Sudan and about the adequacy of the international response; and what action he is going to urge upon the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations operation Lifeline Sudan has reported outstanding emergency needs of about £26 million for southern Sudan to the end of 1994, including 26,000 tonnes of food aid. We initiated and participated in United Nations-led discussions last month which produced a plan of action to address constraints on the delivery and management of the relief effort.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the difficulties in the relationship between the French forces and aid agencies in Rwanda; and how they are to be resolved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The French forces in Rwanda are working closely with the aid agencies which are operational in the French protection area. Following an

ODA assessment mission to this area last week, we will be funding a number of specific projects with British non-governmental organisations in that area.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the adequacy of the international response to the humanitarian needs of those in the zone protected by the French in Rwanda; and what has been the British contribution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A number of aid agencies are active in the area protected by the French. We are contributing to the non-governmental organisations Care and Merlin towards their operations in that area.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what figures he has for the number of visitors to the United Kingdom from north America on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of D-day.

Mr. Sproat: I have received preliminary estimates from the British Tourist Authority about the number of visitors from north America to the United Kingdom as a result of the 50th anniversary of D-day marketing campaign in north America by the BTA and by the Southern tourist board which included a dedicated STB unit within the BTA office in New York.

BTA's early indications show substantially higher numbers of visitors and visitor spending than suggested in pre-campaign forecasts. These figures indicate between 75,000 and 125,000 additional visitors to the United Kingdom from north America, increasing British tourism earnings by between £44 million and £73 million.

I should like to pay particular tribute for this success to the work of Mr. Jeff Hamblin, BTA general manager in north America and his staff, for marketing so effectively the wide range of civilian and military events throughout the United Kingdom, commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-day; also to the exceptional commercial leadership of Mr. Michael Green, chairman of the STB, and Mr. John Slater, managing director of the STB.

National Lottery

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will amend the licence to be awarded under section 5 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 to Camelot Group plc to preclude the use of the lottery network for *(a)* benefits distribution, and *(b)* other commercial activities.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for the Director General of the Office of the National Lottery. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member, and place copies of his reply in the Library of the House.

Television Licences

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the operation and the practice of the television licence office in agreeing or refusing concessionary licence fees to pensioners in sheltered accommodation.

Mr. Brooke: Under section 180 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, responsibility for the administration of the television licensing system, including the concessionary licence scheme, passed to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. TV Licensing acts as the BBC's agents in the administration of the television licensing system, and I have no power to intervene.

British Library

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *260*, how many reports his Department has commissioned about the British library project from the consultants Kennedy and Donkin.

Mr. Brooke: I have commissioned three reports from Kennedy and Donkin Building Services Ltd. for the British library project. They are: a report into the electrical wiring installation; a follow-up report detailing results of a simple inspection of the electrical installation; and a survey of the "as installed" mechanical and electrical services to which I referred in my answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *470*.

Football Pools

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to ask the ITC and Radio Authority to change their respective codes barring advertising by the football pools companies to permit advertising in the future.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Sproat: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

During the past year, my Department has reviewed regulations from whatever source on the business sectors in which it has a policy interest. I also commissioned an inquiry into the impact of regulations on the tourism industry and held a series of meetings with ministerial colleagues to discuss its findings. As a result, the Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance, "Maintaining Portable Electrical Equipment in Hotels and Tourist Accommodation" and my Department hopes to co-operate with the HSE in producing further guidance on health and safety at work regulations for those in the arts, leisure and tourism industry.

In addition, the national lottery, which will begin in November, will benefit many small businesses; in

particular, the thousands of small retailers which will soon be selling tickets, and businesses offering ancillary services to the lottery operator.

My Department intends to continue its work to reduce legislation and administrative burdens on business, and to improve its links and consultation arrangements with businesses operating within the areas where I have a policy interest.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in sport, arts and entertainment.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. My Department was involved in its preparation. I welcome the publication of the document and would encourage everyone with an interest in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views.

Science Museum

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he intends to take to overcome the backlog at the science museum in cataloguing on computer pre-1984 documents.

Mr. Sproat: The National Heritage Act 1983 lays responsibility for the management of the national museum of science industry, of which the science museum forms part, on its board of trustees. It is for the trustees to decide their priorities within the resources available to the museum.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last paid an official visit to the science museum; what plans he has for future visits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I last visited the science museum on 15 March to attend its annual dinner. I have not made any plans to visit in the immediate future.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Services

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water companies in England and Wales take account of ability to pay in levying charges.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General has a duty to set price limits at levels which enable companies to finance their functions as water undertakers, which at the same time protect the interests of water consumers. He is also required to act so as to avoid pricing which discriminates against different classes of customer. The Director General of Water Services has issued guidelines to the companies on their dealings with customers who have difficulty in meeting their charges. His guidelines encourage the introduction of frequent payment options, extending the range of payment facilities which they make available, and early contact with customers.

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the sum of money granted by Her Majesty's Government in grants and loans to water boards in England in the 10 years before their privatisation; and if he will place a schedule of payments, board by board, in the Library.

Mr. Atkins: Prior to 1989, when the water authorities were privatised, as with other nationalised industries, the Government controlled their borrowing through external financing limits. Details of these EFLs can be found in the relevant annual reports and accounts. Information about grants made to water authorities between 1979 and 1989, which included grants to assist with flood defence and land drainage, can be found in the supply estimates for the Department of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Copies of the water authority annual reports and the two Departments' supply estimates are available in the Library of the House.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there is a presumption against development in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Curry: In general, development control decisions affecting areas of outstanding natural beauty should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. In all cases, the environmental effects of new proposals will be a major consideration, although regard should be paid to the economic and social well-being of the areas.

It would normally be inconsistent with the aims of designation to permit the siting of major industrial or commercial development in these areas. Only proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify an exception.

Beaches

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *697*, if he will name the beaches that do not comply with the relevant EC directive; and how many people annually use these beaches.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer, given by my predecessor, of 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *558-59*. Records of the number of people using these waters are not held centrally.

Solent Wetlands

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to designate areas of wetlands in the Solent and surrounding waters under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Atkins: We are awaiting detailed proposals from English Nature for the listing of Southampton water and the Solent as a Ramsar site.

Building Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigation his Department has made in respect of changing lead times and prices of materials in the building industry.

Mr. Baldry: The Department discusses such aspects of the construction market through its "Consultative

Committee on Construction Industry Statistics". It produces joint biannual state of the construction industry reports. The latest was published on 7 July; copies are available in the Library.

Cemeteries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to the long-term problems of shortage of space in existing cemeteries and the desirability or otherwise of creating new cemeteries; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the use of re-usable graves.

Mr. Baldry: Under section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972, the provision of new cemeteries is a matter for local authorities, which are clearly best placed to decide how to satisfy the long-term need for burial space. It is not the practice in the United Kingdom for graves to be re-used. Policy on the removal of human remains is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Environmental Information Regulations 1992

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests for information on animals held in captivity for scientific purposes have been made to his Department citing the Environmental Information Regulations 1992; and how many were accepted as falling within the scope of the regulations.

Mr. Aitkens: I am not aware of such requests.

Single Regeneration Budget

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the names of the organisations or local authorities which have submitted indicative single regeneration budget bids; how many indicative bids each body has submitted; what is the title of each bid; what is the amount of SRB funding each indicative bid would involve; and what are the indications given to each organisation or local authority by the regional Government offices as to whether their indicative bids fit the SRB criteria and are worthy of being worked up into a full bid to be submitted by 7 September.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave her on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *764*.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Government are spending, by region, on urban projects in 1994-95, broken down by Government programme.

Mr. Baldry: I attach a provisional regional breakdown of expenditure for those programmes which now form part of the single regeneration budget.

Single regeneration budget: Provisional regional breakdown, 1994-95

£ million

	Greater London	*South East*	*Eastern*	*South West*	*East Midlands*	*West Midlands*	*Mersey*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North East*	*HQ*	*Total*
Urban Development Corporations	109·6	0·0	0·0	14·5	0·0	47·0	17·0	28·5	13·9	60·5	0·0	291·0
Housing Action Trusts	42·9	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	7·0	13·5	0·0	24·8	0·0	0·0	88·2
Estate Action	98·0	3·1	6·9	12·8	29·7	49·4	38·6	59·3	44·5	29·7	0·6	372·6
City Challenge	52·5	0·0	0·0	0·0	22·5	30·0	22·5	29·1	31·8	44·1	0·0	232·5
Urban Programme	12·8	0·0	0·0	0·9	3·4	12·1	9·4	9·1	8·6	11·8	14·9	83·0
Task Forces	3·8	0·0	0·0	1·3	1·9	1·7	2·0	1·0	2·2	2·1	0·0	16·0
City Action Teams	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·7	0·9
Regional Enterprise Grants	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·8	0·9	0·9	0·6	0·7	2·9	1·4	0·0	9·0
GEST 19	1·8	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·8	0·2	0·3	1·1	0·4	0·0	4·8
Programme Development Fund	0·5	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·4	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·4	0·0	3·3
TEC Challenge	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·1	0·5	—	0·6	0·8	0·7	0·1	4·3
Business Start-up Scheme	8·0	6·6	4·6	7·6	7·5	7·8	6·5	4·8	9·1	4·0	3·6	70·1
Local Initiative Fund	2·5	2·3	1·4	1·5	1·5	1·9	1·3	1·7	3·3	1·9	9·2	28·6
Education Business Partnerships	0·3	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·1		
Teacher Placement	0·3	0·4	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·1	1·5	10·6
Compacts	0·8	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·5	0·5	0·7	0·5	0·6	0·7		
Safer Cities	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·2	0·2	0·1	2·9	3·5
Section 11 (Urban)	28·6	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·2	13·3	0·3	6·5	11·2	0·6	0·0	60·5
Ethnic Minority Grant	2·4	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·0	1·2	0·7	0·1	0·0	5·7
Ethnic Minority Business Initiative	0·2	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·2	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·6
Total	365·7	14·2	14·6	40·9	69·2	174·3	113·2	144·2	156·4	158·9	33·5	1,285·1

Notes:

1. Figures exclude English Partnerships; regional breakdown depends on Corporate Plan.
2. UDCs figure for Greater London includes Docklands Light Railway and for South West includes MOD contribution.
3. City Challenge figures include a contribution from the Housing Corporation.
4. The North West figure for TEC Challenge includes Merseyside.
5. HQ figures cover 1993-94 retentions, national contracts and a small amount of unallocated resources.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Government are planning to spend, by region, on urban projects in 1995-96, broken down into planned expenditure already earmarked for specified urban programmes and planned expenditure forming the general pool of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: A regional breakdown of committed expenditure in 1995-96 for those programmes which now form part of the single regeneration budget is not readily available. The regional distribution of unallocated single regeneration budget funds will not be known until the bidding round has been completed and the successful schemes are announced. The timetable is set out in the

bidding guidance for the budget issued on 14 April 1994, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Pollution

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards meeting the requirements of article 6 or directive 85/210/EEC and article 3 or directive 78/611/EEC about pollution.

Mr. Atkins: In accordance with the requirements of directive 85/210/EEC, which replaced directive 78/611/EEC, the Motor Fuel (Lead Content of Petrol) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 require leaded petrol and unleaded petrol to meet the lead content limit imposed by the directive. The regulations also require leaded and unleaded petrol to meet equivalent quality requirements in respect of the primary parameters that could influence the levels of other pollutants.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the capping regime for local authorities.

Mr. Curry: The Government are committed to firm control of public expenditure. The Government will announce their capping criteria as part of the local government finance settlement.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will continue to pay standard spending assessment reduction grant to local authorities in 1995-96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We propose to pay standard spending assessment reduction grant for a second year, in 1995-96. I recognise that, without some form of damping grant, a number of local authorities would face significant reductions in resources. However, these authorities will by 1995-96 have had more time to bring their spending in line with their standard spending assessment. The scheme may therefore not need to be as generous as in the previous year. We will have to decide the level of SSA reduction grant later this year in the context of the overall local authority settlement.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to allow councils to levy additional taxes in 1995-96.

Mr. Curry: The level of council taxes in 1995-96 will depend, among other things, on authorities' spending decisions, on their collection performance and on the revenue support grant settlement, details of which will be announced later this year.

Local Councillors (Remuneration)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce or extend the entitlement to remuneration of local government elected representatives; what are his proposed new levels for their official duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A copy of my consultation letter of 14 June to the chairmen of local authority associations on proposed changes to the councillors' allowances system has already been placed in the Library of the House.

"This Common Inheritance"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the timetabled targets set in his annual update on "This Common Inheritance" have not been met; and if he will set out the reasons for the failure to meet each of those targets.

Mr. Atkins: The commitments to action reviewed in the third report on the 1990 environment White Paper, Command 2549, are set out in tabular form and the tables themselves show the action taken to date, action that is still required and new commitments.

Architects (Registration)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made on measures to simplify present arrangements for the registration of architects as set out in the Architects (Registration) Acts.

Sir George Young: Since October the Government have been working with the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architects Registration Council to agree on suitable and acceptable measures to streamline the Architects Registration Council. We have now arrived at a package of reforms aimed at making the council more focused and efficient. My Department has today issued a consultation paper on the proposed reforms. Copies are available in Library.

The main proposal is to replace the existing council of 73 members with a small board of 15 members. The new board would represent both lay and professional interests and would concentrate on the key activities of setting criteria for registration; preventing misrepresentation by non-registered architects; disciplining unprofessional conduct; and setting fee levels.

The consultation will be completed in mid-September. We hope that appropriate legislation can be drafted thereafter.

London Pensions Fund Authority

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the financial management and policy review of the London Pensions Fund Authority.

Mr. Baldry: Following his consideration of the final report of the review, which is being published today, my right hon. Friend has agreed that the London Pensions Fund Authority should continue to operate, at least until the future of the local government superannuation scheme is settled in the light of a recent efficiency scrutiny of that scheme. My right hon. Friend has also agreed with the authority an action plan designed to improve the LPFA's already very good service levels and its public accountability.

Copies of the report and of the action plan have been deposited in the Library.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the extension of compulsory competitive tendering to local authorities' professional construction and property services.

Mr. Baldry: Compulsory competitive tendering is being extended to six professional support services, in a phased programme—legal services, professional construction and property services, IT, finance personnel, and corporate and administrative services. Detailed proposals for each service are being developed in close and productive consultations with local authority associations, the Audit Commission, the Account Commission for Scotland, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy and the professional bodies.

Detailed consultation proposals for construction and property services CCT were issued by my Department on 22 February 1994. The Government have now considered the responses received from local authorities, the construction and property professional bodies and other interested parties.

We have concluded that the percentage subject to CCT should be 65 per cent., as suggested in the consultation proposals. I carefully considered comments that the competition figure should be lower, but I feel confident that the proposed figure—subject also to a minimum in-house provision of £450,000 to safeguard the position of the smallest authorities—will enable authorities to gain the benefits of competition across a wide range of their construction and property work, while ensuring that authorities can maintain the necessary in-house professional expertise. The minimum figure of £450,000 will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to meet its purpose.

I also considered the alternative suggestion that these services should be sub-divided into a set of client-side functions, which would be excluded from CCT, and a set of functions of a consultancy nature, all or nearly all of which would be subject to competition. I note, however, that individual local authorities have different views on the types of work which they prefer to retain in-house and those which they prefer to put out to competition. We have sought to ensure that the CCT arrangements for professional services allow individual authorities flexibility in the way in which they approach competition, and I believe that the simple percentage approach provides greater flexibility and is preferable.

We propose that the defined activity will cover construction and property services in relation to local authorities' construction and maintenance programmes and projects, and the management of local authority property—other than housing, which is separately covered by housing management CCT. It therefore does not include authorities' professional work in support of other activities such as regulatory and enforcement functions.

The Government propose that authorities will be able to count the following categories of professional and construction work towards meeting their CCT requirement: work being carried out in house following a voluntary competitive exercise; work carried out for the locally managed schools; work in support of other local authority activity which itself has been exposed to CCT; and construction and property work already contracted out. For a transitional period, authorities will also be able to count construction and property work related to housing management, where this service will become subject to CCT at a later date for the authority in question; and similarly count project work which the authority has in progress at the time when CCT comes into effect and which it is not sensible to tender midway through the project.

Where individual members of staff spend less than 50 per cent. of their time on construction and property work, their time will not be included in the authority's aggregate of defined activity.

In the consultation proposals, we suggested two-stage implementation—initially 35 per cent. rising to 65 per cent. six months later. Responses indicated that this was not felt to be particularly useful. We therefore propose to move to one-stage implementation, but starting at the later date of April 1996 for the London boroughs and English metropolitan districts. This additional six months before commencement will give authorities good time to prepare specifications and carry out tendering.

For shire counties and districts, I have already announced that CCT will come into effect following the local government review and the determination of each authority's new structure, and I have now decided to allow an additional six months in the implementation timetable for both professional construction and property and legal services in all shire areas. We want new authorities to take a fresh and radical look at the way in which they organise and provide themselves with support services, and the additional six months will ensure that they have a full opportunity to do so. Separate timetables will apply in Scotland and Wales.

CCT requires the authorities to operate free and fair competition. My Department is issuing guidance to local authorities and others on the conduct of tendering for professional services. This guidance emphasises that authorities should give full weight to quality in defining their requirements for professional services, and should consider quality of bids fully alongside price, in selecting the best tender proposals.

My officials will be writing to local authorities with the text of the order which the Government will table shortly, and which will provide, subject to resolution of both Houses of Parliament, for professional construction and property services to become a defined activity for CCT purposes.

Some 215 responses were received on the consultation proposals. I have placed a list of responses in the Library.

Local Government Review

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the context of the Local Government Commission's review of the structure of local government in the shire counties, county councils will be expected to take account of the views of possible successor authorities concerning waste disposal strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Waste disposal activities frequently involve long-term considerations, particularly where the creation of new facilities for waste disposal is concerned, and as a consequence the waste disposal contracts entered into by some authorities may run for up to 20 years or more. I am therefore keen that thorough consultation and co-operation between counties and districts is seen to be important in its own right. This is particularly important in view of the current review of local government structure in the counties. The local authority associations have issued guidance—"A Code of Practice on a Prudential Approach to Financial Management prior to Local Government Re-organisation"—which draws attention to the need for successor authorities to be consulted before decisions are taken which will involve successor authorities in a

significant financial commitment. The Audit Commission's consultative paper "Time for Change?" also addresses these issues. It is particularly important that a county council that wishes to pursue a waste disposal strategy which will necessarily involve a long-term contract should seek to involve possible successor authorities in early discussion of the options and ways forward, with the aim of obtaining support for that strategy from all the authorities concerned. I believe that it is in the interests of all if a common view can be achieved on the selection of the best waste disposal options for the future.

Landlord and Tenant Legislation

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the conclusions he has reached on *(a)* the issues discussed in the consultation paper issued by his Department on 27 May 1993 on commercial property leases and *(b)* the recommendations of the Law Commission in its reports 208, "Landlord and Tenant—Business Tenancies: a Periodic Review of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 Part II" and 178, "Landlord and Tenant Law—Compensation for Tenants' Improvements"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: *Consultation paper on commercial property leases.*

The consultation paper discussed whether the Government should take any action over three aspects of commercial leasing practices which had aroused concern: upward only rent reviews, confidentiality clauses and dispute resolution procedures. We issued the consultation paper in response to concern about apparent rigidities in the market and the difficulties a number of commercial tenants were facing with their leases.

It is evident that the market is now providing a greater variety of lease terms. We welcome signs that this is taking place, especially the availability of shorter leases. It is important for the industry to be flexible if it is to meet changes in the market. While the relative bargaining strengths of the parties will depend on the state of the market, it is not clear that occupiers fully appreciate the strength of their own bargaining positions. We consider the best way forward would be for the industry to adopt a code of practice which not only draws attention to the implications of upward rent review clauses but encourages flexibility on other terms. On the assumption that a satisfactory code of practice can be developed and accepted by all sectors of the property industry in consultation with occupiers' representatives and put into effect, we consider that statutory intervention to regulate rent review clauses would not be appropriate.

We favour maximum transparency in the marketplace. We recognise that despite this, confidentiality clauses in leases sometimes reflect the specific and legitimate needs of the landlord and tenant. A ban would be insensitive to these needs. Nevertheless, it would be to the advantage of interested parties if in general greater openness could be achieved, as this should improve the quality of information on which decisions are based. We envisage that the code of practice should encourage greater openness, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary. We shall consult with interested parties on how this could be achieved.

On resolution of disputes, it is no part of the Government role to regulate the procedures to be followed. The main emphasis must rest on the parties remaining free to agree dispute resolution procedures of their own choice. There is, however, scope for better understanding, especially among tenants, of the procedures available and while, in general, existing procedures work satisfactorily, there is a continuing need to be vigilant about the scope for improvement. We therefore look to discussions about a code of practice to stimulate greater awareness of current procedures. More generally the competitiveness White Paper refers to other work being taken forward to simplify the law on arbitration and encouraging other forms of dispute resolution. We also intend to review with interested organisations options for providing a quick, cheap and cost-effective method of resolving disputes for small tenants.

In conclusion, the Government will work with representatives of both landlords and tenants and other interested parties with the aim of producing a code of practice within the next twelve months. The Government will appraise the operation of the code after three years when it should have had reasonable time to influence commercial practices. In particular, we will review the impact on the flexibility and transparency of the market.

Law Commission report on landlord and tenant law

Law Commission report No. 208 dealt with the workings of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, and was concerned primarily with technical issues. It has made a number of useful recommendations about the better workings of the Act—for example, streamlining the procedures for serving notices when a tenancy comes to an end. We propose to implement most of these.

However, some of the issues raised have wider implications for relationships between commercial landlords and tenants. In particular, we wish to give further consideration to the proposal to make it easier for landlords and tenants to contract out of the provisions of the 1954 Act; we will want to satisfy ourselves that this proposal will not jeopardise the position of tenants.

We shall be taking a further look at these wider issues in conjunction with advice provided by my Department's property advisory group.

Law Commission report No. 178 recommended the abolition of the statutory scheme for compensating tenants for improvements that they carry out. We accept the Commission's proposals. This scheme is little used. The procedures are complicated and time-consuming, and the provisions of the 1954 Act have rendered it largely obsolete. The 1954 Act gives tenants the right to lease renewal, except in defined circumstances; and the rent on renewal does not take account of improvements carried out by the tenant.

The 1927 Act also enables tenants to obtain court approval for carrying out improvements which would otherwise be unlawful. We accept the Law Commission's recommendation that this should remain.

We will need primary legislation to implement proposals stemming from these two reports.

I should emphasise that we have no intention of abolishing the 1954 Act, which has stood the test of time and provides a careful balance between the interests of landlords and tenants. In particular, we are not considering removing security of tenure for business tenants.

Marriages

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, how many reports have been made by marriage registrars, and from which registration areas, to the Registrar General, that marriages are suspected to be solely for immigration purposes, in each year since 1992, to the latest convenient date; and in how many of these instances information has been passed on to his Department.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The information will be placed in the Library. During 1993 superintendent registrars reported 361 cases to the Registrar General where they suspected that a proposed marriage had been arranged for the sole purpose of evading statutory immigration controls. Of this number, information in respect of 304 was passed to the Home Office.

So far this year (to 14 July 1994) 270 reports have been received from superintent registrars, of which 194 have been referred to the Home Office.

Environmental Planning

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that environmental planning decisions are taken in full appreciation of their impact on human health and that adequate public health advice is provided by the NHS to joint regional offices of the departments of Health, Employment, Transport and Trade and Industry.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

My Department does not have joint regional offices with other Departments. It is a responsibility of regional and district directors of public health to have regard to and, when appropriate, provide advice upon all factors which may have significant impact upon the public health in their area—including those which may be associated with the consequences of planning decisions. Advice may also be obtained from the National Health Service Executive.

Responsibility for planning matters rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. We understand that guidance to planning authorities, and to applicants for consent to major projects, requires that impact upon human beings should be taken into account in assessing the environmental impact of development plans and projects.

Plumbing Systems

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the consultation paper on the future of water regulations controlling the installation of plumbing systems on buildings.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* Publication is planned for later this summer.

DEFENCE

Bosnia

13. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the military situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: The month-long agreement on a cessation of hostilities expired on 10 July. Fighting has continued in various parts of Bosnia, mostly at a relatively low level. The situation in Sarajevo is generally calm but heavier fighting continues in parts of central Bosnia and in the Bihac area of western Bosnia.

Non-proliferation

14. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent evaluation he has undertaken of the contribution made by United Kingdom nuclear weapons to global non-proliferation.

Mr. Hanley: Our minimum nuclear deterrent and our strong support of international non-proliferation policies both contribute to security and stability.

Future Large Aircraft

15. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with defence chiefs with regard to the future large aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: We hold regular discussions with the chiefs of staff on all aspects of defence policy including our future requirement for transport aircraft.

Hercules

16. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decision he has made about the Hercules replacement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The options for either refurbishing or replacing the first half of the Hercules fleet are still under consideration. I hope to be in a position to make an announcement on the way forward by the end of the year.

Belize

17. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his recent visit to Belize.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend paid a very successful visit to Belize between 27 and 28 May, in the course of which he held useful discussions with the Government of Belize covering regional and bilateral issues and visited the Belize defence force and British Forces. This was the first visit by a Secretary of State for Defence and demonstrates the United Kingdom's continued strong links with Belize, since she became independent in 1981.

Fraud

18. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to eliminate fraud in his Department.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has taken a range of measures to deter and detect fraud and to make staff aware of the need for vigilance. All suspected cases are vigorously pursued.

Anti-personnel Mines

19. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is current policy on the production or use by the United Kingdom forces or by other nations with which the United Kingdom carry out joint operations of anti-personnel mines.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom does not currently produce anti-personnel mines. The production and use of such mines by other nations is a matter for individual Governments, but these mines are legitimate defensive military weapons provided that they are used against military targets and in accordance with the laws of war.

Gulf War Syndrome

20. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information he has received from the United States relating to Gulf war syndrome.

Mr. Hanley: My Department continues to receive information relating to the investigations into an alleged Gulf war syndrome being undertaken by the United States Department of Defence and the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Sir Bedivere

21. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the Sir Bedivere procurement.

26. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce the award of the contract for the RFA Sir Bedivere.

Mr. Aitken: We are placing a contract with Babcock Rosyth Defence Ltd. which was the clear winner of the Sir Bedivere competition.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to announce the successful bid for work on the Sir Bedivere, and what criteria have been set for awarding the contract.

Mr. Aitken: I can today announce the results of the three competitions including that for work on the RFA Sir Bedivere. Contracts are awarded on the basis of best value for money.

We are placing a contract with Babcock Rosyth Defence Ltd., which was the clear winner of the Sir Bedivere competition.

Separately, Swan Hunter has emerged as the lowest bidder for the refit of RFA Olwen. Contract award must, however, depend on Swan Hunter meeting my Department's usual financial and other requirements, in default of which this work will be placed with the next lowest bidder.

Finally, we are placing a contract with Devonport Management Ltd., which submitted the lowest bid for the refit of HMS Birmingham.

Christmas Island Nuclear Tests

22. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the number of service personnel who were involved in the Christmas Island nuclear tests and are still living; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Although information is not held in the form requested, studies by the National Radiological Protection Board have shown that of over 20,000 former participants in the atmospheric nuclear test programme which took place during the 1950s and early 1960s, some 2,800 had died by the end of 1990. This death rate is lower than among the general population in the same age group, and no higher than for the matched control group in the NRPB study. Copies of the NRPB reports are in the Library of the House.

Humanitarian Relief Operations

23. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects next to meet his NATO counterpart to discuss humanitarian relief operations.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence next plans to meet his NATO counterparts at an informal meeting of Defence Ministers in Seville in September. The agenda for that meeting has not yet been decided.

Partnership for Peace Initiative

24. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the NATO partnership for peace initiative.

Mr. Hanley: The implementation of partnership for peace is going very well. To date, 21 states, including the Russian Federation, have signed; the partnership co-ordination cell has been established; the first individual partnership programme, with Poland, has been agreed, and others are under negotiation; and the first land and maritime exercises under the partnership are planned to take place this autumn.

Royal Air Force (Command Structure)

25. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the new command structure in the Royal Air Force which followed the "Options for Change" reductions.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has received no specific representations about the new RAF command structure.

Stefan Adolph Kock

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Stefan Adolph Kock acquired British nationality; and who from the Ministry of Defence or other Government Department intervened with the police in Oban in Argyll regarding the prosecution of Stefan Adolph Kock after he had fired an automatic pistol at two motorists on 15 January 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate is responsible for prosecutions in Scotland. The information requested however cannot be compiled in the time before the House rises for summer recess. I shall therefore arrange from my right hon. and learned Friend to write to the hon. Member as soon as this information is available and and arrange for a copy of the letter to be place in the Library of the House for the benefit of other hon. Members.

SCOTLAND

Council Tax Payers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regulations or laws govern the ability or duty of the proposed new councils to give personal details of council tax payers to *(a)* the proposed new water boards and *(b)* other outside bodies.

Mr. Stewart: The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill provides that it will be the duty of local authorities to supply information held on the setting, levying or collection of council tax to the new water and sewerage authorities if required to do so by my right hon. Friend and if he considers this will assist the latter either in making a charges scheme or collecting water and sewerage charges made under such a scheme. The Bill provides for such requirements to be imposed by regulations subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

As regards other outside bodies, the principal statutory provisions concerning the release of information about council tax payers are contained in the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The provisions of the Act will apply to the proposed new councils. Paragraph 17 of schedule 2 to the Act provides that regulations may be made for the supply of relevant information to any person who requests it for a purpose not relating to part I or II of the Act. However, personal information is specifically excluded from the definition of relevant information.

Child Care Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total public expenditure on child care services for pre-school children under the age of five years, by sector, including all local authority provision and grants for the voluntary sector, for each year from 1989-90 to 1993-94; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Scotland, in each of these years.

Mr. Stewart: Services for children under five are provided from public expenditure by local authorities and from grants from the Scottish Office under the urban programme and under sections 9 and 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

£000

	Local Authority LA Facilities	*Expenditure Voluntary Facilities*	*Scottish Office Expenditure*
1989-90	11,604	1,859	2,163
1990-91	13,696	1,917	2,766
1991-92	14,537	2,285	4,190
1992-93	[1]16,030	[1]1,441	4,647
1993-94	n/a	n/a	4,657

[1] Provisional.

The percentage that this expenditure represents of the Scottish gross domestic product for each of the years for which full information is available lies between 0·04 per cent. and 0·05 per cent.

Cemeteries

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the long-term problems of shortage of space in existing cemeteries and the desirability or otherwise of creating new cemeteries; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the use of re-usable graves.

Mr. Stewart: The provision of cemeteries is a matter for local authorities, whose statutory powers for this purpose include a right to purchase land compulsorily for new cemeteries or the extension of existing cemeteries. The re-use of graves would involve the disturbance of remains, which would be unacceptable to many people; and the implications would need careful and sensitive consideration. I understand that the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration in Scotland is considering the scope for optimising the use of cemeteries in ways which would not involve disinterment.

Road Accidents (Pedestrians)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults have been (i) killed, (ii) seriously or (iii) slightly injured on or near pedestrian crossings in Scotland in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on children and adults killed or injured on or near pedestrian crossings between 1991 and 1993 is given in the table below.

Child and adult pedestrian casualties on or near pedestrian crossings in Scotland, years 1991 to 1993[1]

Severity/Year	*On pedestrian crossing*	*Within zig zag of crossing*	*Within 50 metres of crossing*	*Total*
Child pedestrian[2]				
Fatal				
1991	—	—	2	2
1992	—	1	—	1
1993	1	—	—	1
Serious				
1991	31	2	46	79
1992	20	6	40	66
1993	18	3	29	50
Slight				
1991	117	11	108	236
1992	91	12	113	216
1993	103	13	77	193

Severity/Year	On pedestrian crossing	Within zig zag of crossing	Within 50 metres of crossing	Total
Total				
1991	148	13	156	317
1992	111	19	153	283
1993	122	16	106	244
Adult pedestrian				
Fatal				
1991	5	3	14	22
1992	12	2	7	21
1993	4	—	11	15
Serious				
1991	117	19	149	285
1992	89	18	120	227
1993	53	22	77	152
Slight				
1991	234	24	268	526
1992	203	18	269	490
1993	152	34	198	384
Total				
1991	356	46	431	833
1992	304	38	396	738
1993	209	56	286	551

[1]These figures relate to pedestrian casualties on or near pedestrian crossings involving any number of vehicles. 'Road Accidents Scotland' table 34 provides figures for pedestrian casualties on or near pedestrian crossings involving single vehicles. In 1992 there were 997 such pedestrian casualties compared with 1,021 (283+738) provided above.
[2]Child 0-15 years.

Local Government

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what meetings have taken place of the staff advisory committee on local government in Scotland; on what dates; what was the outcome; what instructions he has given to the committee; what advice he has received from it; and when he expects to promulgate such advice to individual local authorities.

Mr. Stewart: The staff advisory committee held its first meeting on 18 May. I understand that it has held regular meetings since then and has undertaken a number of visits to local authorities. My right hon. Friend has invited the committee as a first task to prepare advice on the nature of any redundancy compensation scheme which should apply in Scotland during the period of reorganisation. The Committee's advice on this issue is expected quite shortly.

Agricultural Services Agency

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the annual report and accounts of the Scottish Agricultural Services Agency for 1992-93.

Mr. Lang: I have today published the report, and I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what preparations he will make to establish new water and sewerage authorities as provided in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Lang: Work to establish the new water and sewerage authorities will proceed as quickly as possible after Royal Assent is obtained to the legislation.

Restructuring of the industry is a major undertaking and it is essential that the chief executives of the new authorities should be in post at the earliest possible date following Royal Assent. Any delay is likely to incur inefficiencies and costs in implementing the restructuring. Selection of candidates will need to be thorough. It will also be time consuming. I therefore intend now to invite tenders for the appointment of executive search consultants to help identify candidates for chief executive posts.

Substantial assets will need to be transferred from the existing local authorities to the new bodies. The asset transfer arrangements will be complex. A priority task will be to issue guidance to assist the regional and islands councils and the Central Scottish Water Development Board in their preparation of asset transfer schemes. To expedite this I also intend to invite tenders for the appointment of technical consultants to advise on the preparation of guidance on asset transfer schemes.

Expenditure on these consultancies is a new service for which parliamentary approval will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for the housing and environmental services, Scotland vote, class XIV, vote 7. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £200,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Prison Rules

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will introduce new rules for prisons and young offender institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The new Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 1994, which were the subject of wide-ranging public consultation late last year, have been laid before this House today. They will come into force on 1 November. The revised rules not only pull together and update the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952 and the Young Offenders (Scotland) Rules 1965, but also lift out of the old Prisons (Scotland) Standing Orders

a number of matters which, because they concern prisoners' rights, more appropriately appear on the face of the rules so that they are subject to parliamentary and public scrutiny. They take account of the relevant European guidance, the European convention on human rights and the European prison rules. They represent a fundamental and wide-ranging overhaul of the rules governing the management of Scottish penal establishments, and are designed not merely to codify existing practice but to introduce change.

The rules provide inter alia for the making of directions. While the latter have legislative force, they do not require to be formally laid before Parliament. Nevertheless, so that hon. Members may see the detail of what is proposed, copies of the draft directions have been placed in the Library. In due course, the directions, like the rules, will be published.

Childhood Cancer, Dounreay

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the recent update of the epidemiological data concerning the incidence of childhood cancer in the Dounreay area.

Mr. Stewart: Details of this work, which was carried out on behalf of the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, were published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Public Health* on 16 June 1994. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

The study found that in the period 1985-91, four cases of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma were observed in the one to 24 age group resident within 25 km of Dounreay, compared to 1.4 expected cases. The results have been examined by COMARE, which concluded that the results reinforced the previous findings that the raised incidence of childhood and young adult leukaemia in the area is a real phenomenon and is less likely to have arisen by chance. The committee concluded that further epidemiological research in the Dounreay area to try to determine causal mechanisms was not a practicable way forward at present. The Government accept this advice. Further studies are, however, under way on a national basis —one on the incidence of childhood cancer in the vicinity of all nuclear sites in Scotland, the other a case control study of childhood cancer in Scotland, linked with a parallel study in England and Wales.

The full test of the Committee's advice is as follows:

Comare statement

Incidence of Leukaemia and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in Children and Young Adults Resident in the Dounreay Area of Caithness, Scotland, in 1968-1991. Black R. J., Sharp L., Harkness E. F., McKinney P. A.

Background

The second report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE), entitled 'Investigation of the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people near the Dounreay Nuclear Establishment, Caithness, Scotland', which was published in 1988, concluded that for the period 1968-1984: "There is evidence of a raised incidence of leukaemia in young people living in the vicinity of Dounreay.".

Further case-control and cohort epidemiological investigations were recommended and undertaken in subsequent years [Case-control study of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in children in Caithness near Dounreay nuclear installation. Uruquhart et al, BMJ 1991; 302, 687-692. Incidence of leukaemia and other cancers in birth and school cohorts in the Dounreay area. Black et al, BMJ 1992; 304, 1401-1405]. In the light of this work and other considerations, COMARE requested that the epidemiological data for childhood leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in the vicinity of Dounreay should be analysed to include the period 1984-1991.

This work was undertaken by the Information and Statistics Division of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and was published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Public Health* on 16 June 1994.

The Study

The objective of this report was to review the geographical incidence of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in children and young adults resident in the area less than 25km from the Dounreay nuclear installation, and in the reminder of the KW postcode area. The full-time period 1968-91 for which data are now available was studied to determine whether the excess incidence reported in the period up to 1984 has continued in subsequent years.

In comparing observed and expected numbers of cases of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, the expected numbers were based on Scottish national rates.

The authors report that in 1968-91, 12 cases were observed compared with 5·2 expected in the zone within 25km of the Dounreay plant (p=0·007). In the latest period 1985-91, which was not included in the second COMARE report, 4 cases were observed compared with 1·4 expected (p=0·059).

Comare's Advice to Government

COMARE have considered this study and welcomed its publication.

The Committee endorsed the methods used.

Eight additional cases of childhood cancer are reported in this study for the period 1985-1991. Of these, 4 were within 25km of Dounreay and these cases give added weight to the previous findings that the raised incidence of childhood and young adult leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in this area is a real phenomenon.

COMARE's second report concluded:

> "Although chance cannot be entirely dismissed as an explanation of the raised incidence of childhood leukaemia in the vicinity of Dounreay, we consider that it is now less likely than when Sellafield was considered in isolation".

The new findings reinforce that view.

Regarding the causation of leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in the area, the Committee considered that this study neither adds nor removes support for the "population mixing" hypothesis suggested by Professor Kinlen. The Committee also noted that the data in the case-control study [Urquhart et all 1991], which examined parental exposure to radiation, showed that the "paternal preconception irradiation" hypothesis put forward by Professor Gardner could not account for the observed excess and that the new data did not change this position.

The Committee concluded that further epidemiological research in the Dounreay area to try to determine causal mechanisms is not considered to be a practicable way forward at present, because of the small number of cases involved. However, the incidence of any new cases of childhood leukaemia which might arise should continue to be monitored at appropriate time periods. Rigorous analysis of pathological material from such individuals should continue to be strongly encouraged.

Health Visitors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health visitors were employed in each health board area in September 1988 and in September 1992.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the table below.

Health visitors employed by the National Health Service in Scotland[1] (whole time equivalent as at 30 September)

	1988	*1992[2]*
Scotland	1,515·9	1,408·3
Argyll and Clyde	119·2	116·3
Ayrshire and Arran	105·7	88·1
Borders	26·1	23·2
Dumfries and Galloway	37·3	27·9
Fife	112·4	112·7

	1988	1992[2]
Forth Valley	89·6	85·4
Grampian	161·3	153·9
Greater Glasgow	322·7	264·3
Highland	46·0	44·9
Lanarkshire	160·8	153·6
Lothian	217·9	211·0
Orkney	7·0	5·0
Shetland	8·0	6·7
Tayside	90·9	107·7
Western Isles	11·0	7·6

[1] Excludes combined duty nurses and health visitors in training. Includes field work teachers.
[2] Grades G to I. These staff are assumed to be qualified health visitors.

Agricultural Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost in 1993 in Scotland of payments under *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme, *(b)* the nitrate sensitive area scheme, *(c)* the farm and conservation grant scheme, *(d)* the pilot beef and sheep extensification schemes, *(e)* the woodland grant scheme, *(f)* the farm woodland premium scheme, *(g)* the orchard grubbing scheme, *(h)* the optional five-year set-aside scheme, *(i)* the habitat scheme, *(j)* the moorland scheme, *(k)* the countryside access scheme and *(l)* the organic aid scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: The information is given in the table.

	1993-94 Actual expenditure £ million	1994-95 Estimated expenditure £ million
Environmentally Sensitive Area Scheme	0·963	4·500
Nitrate Sensitive Area Scheme	nil	0·100
Farm and Conservation Grant Schemes	5·325	5·150
Pilot Beef and Sheep Extensification Schemes	0·074	0·074
Woodland Grant Scheme	11·600	12·600
Farm Woodland Premium Scheme	0·485	1·134
Orchard Grubbing Scheme[1]	nil	nil
Five-year Set-Aside Scheme	3·981	2·423
Habitats Scheme	nil	nil
Moorland Scheme	nil	nil
Set-Aside Access Scheme (Scottish equivalent of Countryside Access Scheme)	nil	nil
Organic Aid Scheme	nil	0·950

[1] Scheme now closed.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost in 1993 in Scotland of payments under *(a)* the sheep annual premium, *(b)* the suckler cow premium, *(c)* the beef special premium and *(d)* the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: The expected values of the 1993 scheme payments in Scotland are detailed below:

	£ million
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme	99·1
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	43·4
Beef Special Premium Scheme	24·8
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	50·9

Estimates for the value of each scheme in Scotland for the 1994 scheme year are detailed below:

	£ million
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme	95·7
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	53·4
Beef Special Premium Scheme	30·7
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	40·8

Wheelchair Service

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what changes in the basis of funding of the wheelchair service to individual disabled people he has made following the report to the Scottish Home and Health Department, "How should the Wheelchair Service develop in the Nineties?"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether his Department has responded to the recommendations made to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department contained in the report "How Should the Wheelchair Service Develop in the Nineties?"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* No changes have been made to the funding arrangements for this financial year. At present, the six centres which provide wheelchair services are funded by direct allocations from the national services division of the Common Services Agency. The future funding arrangements are under review by that division and any decision will be taken in consultation with health boards which are responsible for assessing the health needs of resident populations and for purchasing the appropriate services.

The views and recommendations expressed in the report "How should the Wheelchair Service develop in the Nineties?" have been noted by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and have been drawn to the attention of the national services division and health boards.

Community Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what developments are taking place in community care to accommodate psychiatric patients who are currently in hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The level of provision for community care for every patient will vary and in all cases will reflect and respond to the needs of the individual. The aim is to secure the most effective package of services to meet the needs of patients and carers.

Consultants

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which management consultants have been employed by his Department to assist in the assessment of applications for trust status; how much each was paid; and how many assessments they undertook, in each wave.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The information requested is provided in the table:

Wave	Consultants	Number of Trust applicants assessed	Payment (including VAT)
First	None	3	—
Second	KPMG Management Consulting	14	£44,885
Third	Coopers and Lybrand	23	£51,[illegible]

In addition, KPMG Management Consulting was paid £3,760 to assist in the assessment of the merger between Royal Scottish National Hospital NHS trust and Forth Valley healthcare unit. They have also been appointed to assist in the assessment of the current fourth wave of NHS trust applicants.

Traffic Offences

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of speeding offences recorded within Argyll and Bute district in each year since 1987; and what was the total number of successful prosecutions in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The available information for 1987 to 1993 is detailed in the table:

Speeding offences, number recorded by the police and number of charges proved in Argyll and Bute, 1987-1993

	Number of offences recorded by the police	Number of charges proved
1987	168	12
1988	139	25
1989	137	17
1990	296	21
1991	407	84
1992	383	59
1993	361	[1]—

[1] Not yet available.

Notes:

1. The result of court proceedings may well refer to offences committed in earlier years.
2. Speeding offences may be dealt with by way of fixed penalties in addition to court proceedings.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many motorists were *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of (i) failure to accord precedence at pedestrian crossings, endorseable offences, (ii) failure to comply with traffic sign, (iii) speed limit offences, (iv) driving after consuming alcohol or taking drugs and (v) reckless driving and so on in Scotland in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The available information for 1991 and 1992 is given in the Scottish Office statistical bulletins "Motor Vehicle Offences In Scotland 1988-91" and "Motor Vehicle Offences In Scotland, 1992", copies of which are in the Library. Information for 1993 is not yet available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Permanent Secretaries' Handbook

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under what provision of the code of open government it has been decided to keep secret those parts of the permanent secretaries' handbook not related to national security.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* In addition to exemption 1 of the code of practice—defence, security and international relations—exemptions 2—internal discussion and advice—7—effective management of the public service—and 8—public employment, public appointments and honours—would be relevant to the handbook's contents.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the last amendments were made to the permanent secretaries' handbook.

Mr. Waldegrave: The handbook is revised as new material becomes available.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the headings of all those sections in the permanent secretaries' handbook which do not relate to national security.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have nothing to add to my reply of 9 March, *Official Report,* column *256.*

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Light Bulbs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee why more powerful light bulbs have been installed in various rooms and corridors of the Palace of Westminster; and what assessment he has made of the energy conservation efforts of this practice.

Mr. Ray Powell: The general policy on lighting in the Palace of Westminster over the last four years includes a rolling programme to install low-energy light bulbs wherever safety and the design of lighting allows. The result has been a 63 per cent. reduction in the use of electricity for lighting in those areas where such bulbs are used.

There is an additional programme throughout the Palace to overhaul the lighting in the corridors and to install emergency lighting. The use of modern electrical fitttings in these areas gives more efficient lighting but with a reduction in power consumption. Any instances where more powerful light bulbs have been installed have been at the request of Members.

I will ask the Director of Parliamentary Works to write to the hon. Member about the energy conservation programme.

Upper Waiting Hall Exhibitions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the skin care campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 21 November to Friday 25 November.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 28 November to Friday 2 December.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *212-15*, if he will update the information on the number of temporary and permanent vacancies at jobcentres in each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 19 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question asking for an update of information given earlier about the number of temporary and permanent vacancies at Jobcentres in each region.

In my earlier reply, I gave you details of temporary and permanent vacancies notified to Jobcentres from April 1987 to 8 October 1993. The updated information, covering the period 11October 1993 to 8 April 1994, is given in the attached table.

I hope this is helpful.

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies
11 October 1993 to 8 April 1994

Region	Period: 11 October 1993 to 7 January 1994 — Permanent vacancies notified	Temporary vacancies notified	10 January 1994 to 8 April 1994 — Permanent vacancies notified	Temporary vacancies notified
Northern Region	15,619	5,769	18,809	5,498
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	28,980	8,466	32,935	8,530
East Midlands and Eastern Region	35,125	12,076	40,182	8,906
London and South East Region	99,996	30,770	115,843	24,927
South West Region	28,889	9,637	37,981	8,107
Office for Wales	20,909	13,155	24,830	10,413
West Midlands Region	32,415	9,240	38,040	7,085
North West Region	54,348	22,229	63,767	18,775
Office for Scotland	42,347	16,614	49,574	13,534
National total	358,628	127,956	421,961	105,775

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many construction workers were registered as unemployed in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* Estimates from the labour force survey of the number of ILO unemployment people whose previous employment was in the construction industry are shown in the following table:

Numbers of ILO Unemployed People Previously Employed in the Construction Industry (SIC 92—Section F).

Great Britain	Thousands (Not seasonally adjusted)
Spring 1992	401
Spring 1993	412
Winter 1993-94	369

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination in employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a document entitled "A Consultation on Government Measures to Tackle Discrimination Against Disabled People" on 15 July, to which the Department contributed. This document includes proposals for measures to tackle unjustifiable discrimination against disabled people in the labour market. I would encourage everyone with an interest in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views. We shall be considering the responses that are made to the proposals during the consultation process.

Training

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will examine the criteria for output-related funding to make possible payment for completion of component units of national vocational qualifications in order to ensure the delivery of appropriate training to young people with special training needs.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department is experimenting with the scope for using units of national vocational qualifications as part of output-related funding pilots with a number of training and enterprise councils. However, TECs are already responsible for ensuring that suitable training is available for young people, including those with special training needs.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to develop a national policy on training which would enable the training and enterprise councils, the careers service, local authorities, educational institutions, training providers and industry bodies to co-ordinate fully the delivery of training to young people.

Miss Widdecombe: Training for young people is a strategic priority set out in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's vocational education and training strategy statement for Great Britain, "Prosperity through Skills" published in December 1993. Within this strategy, the development of specific initiatives such as modern apprenticeships requires all those involved in vocational education and training to work together at local, sectoral and national level. A copy of "Prosperity through Skills" is available in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to secure an improvement in co-ordination between all those organisations involved in the delivery of training to young people.

Miss Widdecombe: Improvement in the delivery of training for young people requires concerted action by all those involved in vocational education and training at local, sectoral and national level. A series of strategic level indicators, some of which are linked to the national targets for education and training, are set out in "Prosperity through Skills"—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement of vocational education and training strategy. Those indicators are intended to help planners and practitioners assess how vocational education and training activities are achieving progress in line with the statement, and identify scope for improved co-ordination. A copy of "Prosperity through Skills" is available in the Library.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were serving an apprenticeship with companies or industries within the Greater London area at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: Available information from the labour force survey shows that, in winter 1993-94, 14,000 men resident in the Greater London area, who were in employment, were undertaking apprenticeships. The sample size does not allow reliable estimates for women in this geographical area. Information based on the workplace is not collected.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Africa (Parliamentary Statements)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions since 1979 when a Foreign Secretary made a statement to the House on matters to do with Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested as recorded in the JUSTIS database is:

(1) 9 and 12 July 1984: Statements (further to that of the Home Secretary on 6 July) about the abduction of Mr. Umaru Dikko, the Nigerian ex-Minister on 5 July and subsequent developments to date.
(2) 19 May 1986: Statement on South African incursions into Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There have additionally been a number of other general statements in which reference to Africa has been made.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances Her Majesty's Government will re-open discussions with Argentina concerning the sovereignty of the Falkland islands.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs informed the House on 4 May, he was able to reassure the Falkland islanders during his recent visit that sovereignty of the islands is not for discussion. We have no doubts about our sovereignty and we have made it clear to Argentina that the matter is not for negotiation. We support the right of the islanders to self-determination.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people have been repatriated to Vietnam from Hong Kong in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Numbers
1989	874
1990	5,387
1991	7,747
1992	11,668
1993	12,751

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what compensation has been paid to Vietnamese boat people who lost possessions during the disturbance at the Whitehead detention centre, Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No compensation has been paid to Vietnamese migrants who claim that they lost possessions during the operation carried out in the Whitehead detention centre in Hong Kong on 7 April. The question of civil liability and damages, if any, will be considered only if and when any claims are received and will be determined by the courts of Hong Kong.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total number of

police and security forces that were used to quell the disturbances at the Whitehead Vietnamese detention centre, Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A total of 1,349 police and Correctional Services Department officers were involved in the operation which took place in the Whitehead detention centre on 7 April. The Governor of Hong Kong ordered an independent inquiry into the operation which concluded that the Correctional Services Department had acted correctly in deploying such a large contingent.

Haiti

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sanctions he will support against Haiti; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom voted in favour of Security Council resolutions 841 and 917. These resolutions prevented the sale and supply of petroleum products and arms; imposed an import and export ban, subject to minor exceptions for humanitarian purposes; prohibited aircraft flights, except for scheduled passenger flights, taking off from, landing in, or overflying the United Kingdom if they are destined for or have come from Haiti; and restricted payments under bonds. The necessary legislation has been passed to bring these measures into effect.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to support the United States Government efforts to restore democracy to Haiti.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Along with our European Union partners, we have consistently reaffirmed our commitment to the restoration of democratic government in Haiti. We support the efforts of the Organisation of American States and the United Nations to bring about a political settlement. We are taking steps to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 917, which was adopted by the United Nations on 6 May 1994 to impose sanctions on Haiti.

Chinese Hydrogen Bomb Test

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact he has had with the United States of America in relation to its criticism of the Chinese hydrogen bomb test on 10 June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Officials are in regular contact with their United States counterparts on all aspects of nuclear testing, including the Chinese nuclear test on 10 June.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for the Government's policy in relation to the test ban negotiations of the nuclear test by China on 10 June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made it clear that we regret the nuclear test carried out by China on 10 June. China is nevertheless contributing to the present negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty; we welcome this. We are committed to concluding, at an early date, a treaty which will make an effective contribution to the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to China regarding its explosion of a hydrogen bomb underground in a test on 10 June; and what are his reasons for any action or inaction in this area.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on 8 July, *Official Report,* column *362.*

Asil Nadir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had and with whom regarding the return to the United Kingdom of Mr. Asil Nadir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Officials of the Serious Fraud Office have pursued their investigations in both northern Cyprus and Turkey. We have been in close touch with those involved in the investigation here and in Cyprus and Turkey.

Malaysia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent contacts Her Majesty's Government have had with the Malaysian Government about the role of the British press, its editors and proprietors in relation to United Kingdom Malaysian relations; what was discussed; what action was taken *(a)* formally or *(b)* informally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Malaysian Government are well aware of our concern that inaccurate reporting and speculative allegations in the press can be deeply damaging to British interests. They also fully understand that the British Government do not seek to intervene in or influence the editorial or management policy of the press.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development conference which meets in Nairobi on 18 July to consider the future of Sudan; and what they were.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have given strong political support to the IGADD initiative but have made no representations to the IGADD Governments on points of detail in advance of the third round of talks. Such points will be for the parties themselves to resolve. We are providing £25,000 in financial support for the IGADD secretariat.

North Korea

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussion he has had with the United States Government on the future of the nuclear programme in North Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We discuss the issue of North Korea's non-compliance with its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement regularly with the

United States Administration. Following the death of Kim Il-Sung we hope that talks between the United States and North Korea aimed at resolving this crisis will be rescheduled very soon, and that a new date for a summit between the leaders of North and South Korea will also be set. We believe that any solution to this crisis must reaffirm the IAEA's right to inspect all North Korea's nuclear facilities to the agency's satisfaction.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evaluation he has made of the threat posed by the current North Korean nuclear programme; and what action he plans to take.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As a result of North Korea's consistent failure to co-operate fully with its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement, the agency's director general has stated that he cannot conclude that nuclear material has not been diverted for military use in North Korea. We urge North Korea to allay suspicions by complying fully with its IAEA safeguards agreement and affirming unequivocally its commitments to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. If dialogue between North Korea and the United States and South Korea fails, then we are ready to support further consideration of the matter by the United Nations Security Council including the imposition of sanctions.

Algeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the security situation in Algeria; what estimate he has made of the risk to British citizens; and what are the implications for regional security.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The security situation in Algeria is serious. British citizens are at risk. We are advising that visitors should not travel to Algeria and that British residents should leave unless they have compelling reason to remain. So far, there is no evidence that the conflict has had any destabilising effect in other countries.

European Union

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek representation for members of national Parliaments on the reflection group of representatives of Foreign Ministers; what is his assessment of the extent to which the group's discussions could be biased by association with the European Parliament only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Details of the work and membership of the study group of Foreign Ministers' representatives have not yet been decided, but the Corfu European Council agreed that two representatives of the European Parliament will also participate in the work of the group. The study group would become unwieldy if each national Parliament was separately represented. We can see no reason, however, why national Parliaments should not put their own ideas to the study group, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has suggested that the appropriate Select Committees should make representations in due course.

European Union (Accessions) Bill

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his statement in the House of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 692-93, on Chancellor Kohl's views on the old idea of a United States of Europe, what assessment he has made of the new German policies for the future of Europe and of the recent comment by the German ambassador to Moscow, Otto von der Gablentz, on national sovereignty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We look forward to close co-operation with the Germans during their presidency on such issues as competitiveness, deregulation, closer co-operation with central Europe, open markets and subsidiarity. I have not seen a text of what the German ambassador in Moscow is suggested to have said, but I certainly would not agree that

"national sovereignty is becoming irrelevant and meaningless".

Such comments would be hard to reconcile with statements by Chancellor Kohl, first, in a speech in Schwäbisch hall on 4 May 1994, that he

"does not want a European superstate . . . In the Europe of the future, we will remain securely rooted in our homeland."

or secondly, in a speech to the Bundestag on 11 November 1993, that

"Unity in diversity is the only sensible alternative to dreary centralism."

East Timor

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the information he has regarding the arrests and killing of students at the university of East Timor by Indonesian Government forces on 14 July.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are concerned about reports from East Timor of renewed clashes between students and the military, but the facts surrounding the events of 14 July are still far from clear. We have asked Her Majesty's embassy in Jakarta for a detailed report.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to *(a)* the Indonesian diplomatic mission in London and *(b)* the Indonesian Government regarding the killings and arrests by Government forces at the university of East Timor on 14 July.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Initial reports of events in Dili on 14 July differ widely. We have asked Her Majesty's embassy in Jakarta for a detailed report. A decision on whether representations are appropriate will be taken in the light of that report, in consultation with European Union partners.

Diplomatic Service

Mr Lidington To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will provide members of Her Majesty's diplomatic service with passports which clarify their diplomatic status in accordance with the practice of other countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This matter was recently reviewed and the Government have decided to issue diplomatic and official passports to members of Her Majesty's service when serving abroad, staff from other Departments on

long-term attachments at our overseas posts and accompanying dependants. The new passports, for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be responsible, are intended to clarify diplomatic status and remove scope for misunderstanding. They will be identical to standard common format passports except for the addition of "diplomatic" or "official" on the cover and two inside pages. This measure will rectify a long-standing anomaly in Britain's passport issuing practice and bring our diplomatic personnel into line with their colleagues elsewhere.

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the security situation in Burundi and the illegal importation of arms.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Latest reports indicate that the security situation in Burundi remains calm but tense. There is no mandatory United Nations embargo against the importation of arms into Burundi.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long a person applying for entry clearance on 31 March or the latest convenient date at each post in the Indian sub-continent could expect to wait, in each queue, for *(a)* first interview, *(b)* referral of the case to the Home Office and the requested information being received by the post, *(c)* decision after first interview and *(d)* for the explanatory statement prepared by the post in the case of appeal against any refusal to be despatched to the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The only information which is available centrally is on expected waiting times to interview for applicants applying in the Indian sub-continent. This information is published in table 2·5 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 9/94, "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third and Fourth Quarters and Year 1993", a copy of which is in the Library. Statistics for the first and second quarters of 1994 will be published in October.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children were waiting in each queue at each post in the Indian sub-continent on 31 March or the latest convenient date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is given in the table. No information is available centrally on the gender of applicants in queues. In Calcutta there are no applicants awaiting first interview. Information on the number of applicants in Karachi is not centrally available but all applicants are expected to receive a first interview within three weeks.

Number of applicants for entry clearance visas waiting for first interview at 31 March 1994

Number of persons

	Bombay	*Delhi*	*Islamabad*	*Madras*[1]	*Dhaka*[2]
Queue 1					
Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years old, special compassionate cases	—	—	45	—	330
Queue 2					
Spouses and children under 18 years	142	277	1,248	—	2,704
Queue 3					
Fiancé(es) and others applying for the first time for settlement	321	162	209	—	500
Queue 4					
Reapplicants	292	95	629	—	337
Total	755	534	2,131	34	3,871

[1] Madras does not operate a separate queueing system.

[2] Only a proportion of applicants at Dhaka are listed as awaiting first interview. Other applicants will have their applications resolved without interview, where possible.

Major Reginald Dunk and Mr. Alexander Schlesinger

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what investigations into the conduct of his Department he proposes to carry out following the acquittal on appeal of Major Reginald Dunk and Mr. Alexander Schlesinger.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Court of Appeal has yet to deliver its reasoned judgment. We shall consider whether to make any changes in the light of that judgment.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes in the policy and practice of his Department he proposes to institute following the acquittal on appeal of Major Reginald Dunk and Mr. Alexander Schlesinger.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to my answer to his previous question. Any investigation must similarly await the reasoned judgment of the Court of Appeal.

EDUCATION

Class Sizes

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of primary school classes being taught by one teacher contain 20 or fewer pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1993, the latest date for which information is available, 11 per cent. of primary school classes taught by one teacher had 20 or less pupils.

School Closures

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many proposals from local authorities to close or re-organise schools have been awaiting a decision from him for *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six monehts, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* more than 12 months.

Mr. Robin Squire: At 15 July, a total of 149 proposals published under either section 12 or section 13 of the Education Act 1980 were under consideration in the Department. Of these, 94 had been awaiting a decision for a period of up to three months, 28 for between three and six months, 14 for between six and nine months, six for between nine and 12 months and seven for in excess of 12 months. Proposals received by the Secretary of State within the last four months may in certain cases fall to the local authority for determination.

Discretionary Awards

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual expenditure on discretionary awards by each local education authority in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: Returns made to the Department by local authorities about their expenditure on discretionary awards for the academic year 1992-93 will not be available for publication until August. Data for 1993-94 have not yet been collected.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 July, *Official Report,* columns *327-28,* how many delegates attended each of the conferences on special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: The number of delegates attending each conference was as follows:

Location	*Date*	*Number*
London	15 June	218
Manchester	21 June	200
York	24 June	214
Cardiff	1 July	129
Bristol	5 July	166
Birmingham	7 July	217

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress is being made on establishing the special educational needs tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to be able to announce that regulations governing the tribunal's procedures have today been laid before the House. In addition, a guide to the tribunal, entitled "Special Educational Needs Tribunal: How to Appeal", which has been awarded the crystal mark by the Plain English Campaign, will be published shortly. The guide will suggest easy-to-follow steps for parents wishing to appeal to the tribunal. I am arranging for proof copies of the guide to be placed in the Library.

Weapons Technologies (Access)

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the conclusion of his discussions with the representatives of the universities and colleges about means of ensuring that postgraduate students and researchers from countries of proliferation concern do not gain access to technologies which could assist in the development of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Boswell: I have written today to the chairmen of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, representing universities, and the Standing Conference of Principals, representing the higher education colleges, about the need agreed with them for careful consideration of applications from certain visiting researchers from overseas at postgraduate and post-doctoral levels in certain fields of scientific research. The Government have agreed to provide information and guidance to the universities and colleges on the countries and technologies of concern, for them to take into account when reaching their decisions. Copies of those letters have been placed in the Library.

Road Safety

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the last research into the provision of road safety education was undertaken; and whether the results were published.

Mr. Forth: The last full survey of the provision of road safety education was undertaken in 1986-87 by Reading university, under contract to the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. The project was funded wholly by Government funds. The results were published in 1989.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department has spent on road safety training during each of the past 10 years for which records are available.

Mr. Forth: Most schools now have delegated budgets which allow them to invest in road safety training. The Department does not, itself, provide road safety training for school teachers.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of schools include road safety training in their normal programmes.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will ask the Office for Standards in Education to undertake a review of road safety education and to make recommendations on good practice and how road safety education can be improved.

Mr. Forth: No.

Parental Choice

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of parents obtained their first choice of school for their children on transfer at 11 years in each of the last five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Data on the percentage of parents securing their first choice of school for their children on transfer at 11 years are not collected centrally. Surveys commissioned by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in 1992 and by *The Times* in 1993 suggest that some 90 per cent. of parents gain places for their children at their first choice of secondary school.

Parents Charter

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment of potential advantages to recipients as a whole preceded the recent universal distribution of the updated parents charter.

Mr. Robin Squire: The changes taking place in our schools are of great importance to everyone, not just to the parents of school-age children. Independent research carried out last year among a representative sample of parents supported the view that distribution by national doordrop would be the right course of action.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* nursery schools and classes and *(b)* children under five in reception classes, in each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for England;

(2) what was the average cost in 1993-94 of a full-time equivalent place in *(a)* a nursery class and *(b)* a nursery school.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Euducation what work has been, or is being, undertaken to examine the relative costs and benefits of providing education and day care services for children under the age of five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government are exploring a range of possible ways of making education provision for children under five years old more widely available as resources allow. The review is examining the relative cost-effectiveness and quality of different forms of provision, bearing in mind the rich diversity of current provision and the preferences of parents. Day care provision for children is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Forth: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. They help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high quality business support across the country.

The Government's policies for increased participation in further education and vocational training, reinforced by their support for the national targets for education and training, will help small firms to improve the skill levels of their emloyees. The charter for further education sets out what employers have a right to expect from colleges in the further education sector.

The Department encourages small firms to tender for its contracts. It abides by the CBI prompt payment code; and each contract also includes a requirement to ensure sub-contractors are paid promptly. The Department monitors both the number and value of its contracts let to small firms. In the first four months of 1994-95, 58 per cent. of contracts were placed with small firms—35 per cent. by value. The corresponding figures for the previous 12 months were 46 per cent. and 22 per cent.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in education.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The Department for Education contributed to its preparation. I welcome the publication of this document and would encourage everyone with an interest in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views.

There are no further plans for specific consultations on countering unfair discrimination against disabled persons in education since comprehensive new measures have been introduced by the Education Act 1993. In particular, the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special education needs, published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in May this year under the 1993 Act, reflects extensive consultation with schools, local education authorities, the health service and voluntary agencies.

Primary Schools

Mrs. Anne Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his present estimate of the number of surplus places in primary schools in total and in each local education authority area.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest figures available on a comprehensive basis were collected by the Department through a detailed survey of local education authorities in 1991. For figures derived from that survey, I refer the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *517-21*. The total number of surplus places in primary schools in 1991 according to our survey was 639,696.

Surplus places figures for 1994 will be available later this year once we have completed our analysis of the first information returns made by LEAs and the Funding Agency for Schools in accordance with the requirements of regulations made under section 21 of the Education Act 1993.

Education Statistics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the figures for *(a)* school leavers, *(b)* further education leavers and *(c)* higher education leavers for (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1992-93, (iii) 1991-92, (iv) 1990-91 and (v) 1980-81.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not have information on the numbers of school leavers for 1993-94

or 1992-93. The estimated numbers of school leavers in England in 1991-92, 1990-91 and 1980-81 were 519,200, 541,900 and 734,000 respectively. Comprehensive data on leavers from further and higher education are not collected centrally.

Cycling

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with his colleagues at the Departments of Health, of Transport and of the Environment about encouraging children to bicycle to school, in order to reduce pollution and congestion, while encouraging health.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 18 July 1994, *Official Report,* column *71.*

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Castration and Tail-Docking

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many piglets were castrated in the last period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Figures on the number of piglets which have been castrated are not available.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many lambs were *(a)* castrated and *(b)* tail-docked in the last period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Figures on the number of lambs castrated and tail-docked are not available.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met representatives of the fishing industry to discuss fisheries policy.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss various aspects of fisheries policy. On 23 May I chaired an important seminar on fish marketing, with representatives from a wide range of interested parties.

Deer

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what investigations her Department is undertaking in respect of the condition of deer frequenting the deer sanctuary at Baronsdown;

(2) when she will report on the effect of administering uncontrolled doses of Panacur at the deer sanctuary at Baronsdown.

Mr. Soames: I am looking into several complaints which have been received about deer management on Exmoor and in particular the apparent administration of the drug Panacur to deer at the Baronsdown sanctuary.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her policy in respect of administering the drug Panacur to wild deer.

Mr. Soames: Panacur, like any veterinary medicine, should be administered in accordance with the law. It is not currently specifically licensed for administration to deer. Under European legislation however, and in line with the code of practice adopted by the British Veterinary Association in 1991, a veterinarian may prescribe a veterinary medicine licensed for another species for administration to animals under his care.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessments she has made of the effect of administering *(a)* uncontrolled under-doses and *(b)* uncontrolled overdoses of the drug Panacur to wild deer.

Mr. Soames: It is for manufacturers of veterinary medicines to assess the proper dose rate for their product as they seek to satisfy the efficacy criterion to obtain the necessary license. Panacur does have a reasonable safety profile and moderate changes in dose rates should not give rise to unacceptable risks. Underdosing may, however, involve a theoretical risk of creating resistance to the drug in the target worms.

Wormers

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which wormers are approved for administration to wild animals.

Mr. Soames: According to the information currently available to me, there are no wormers licensed for administration to wild animals.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research she has conducted into the epidemiology of BSE in the siblings of affected cattle.

Mr. Soames: The occurrence of BSE in siblings has naturally been an integral part of research studies to determine whether susceptibility to BSE has a genetic component. To date, these studies have revealed that the genetic make-up of cattle does not play a major role in their susceptibility to BSE.

Diets and Nutrition

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people in the population were estimated in her Ministry's 1994 report of the 1986-87 dietary and nutritional survey to be below the lower reference nutrient intake recommended for energy, by age and sex, representing the lowest intakes which will meet the needs of some individuals in the group set out in paragraph 1.3.8 of the report of the panel on dietary reference values; and which family and socio-economic categories were disproportionately represented among them.

Mr. Soames: There are no lower reference nutrient intakes for energy in the report of the panel on dietary reference values.

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the energy requirements defined for children of different age and sex and the minimum cost at standard market prices of meeting those requirements in 1994.

Mr. Soames: The estimated average energy requirements published by the Department of Health in 1991 are:

Age	Males		Females	
	MJ/day	kcal/day	MJ/day	kcal/day
0-3 months	2·28	545	2·16	515
4-6 months	2·89	690	2·69	645
7-9 months	3·44	825	3·20	765
10-12 months	3·85	920	3·61	865
1-3 years	5·15	1,230	4·86	1,165
4-6 years	7·16	1,715	6·46	1,545
7-10 years	8·24	1,970	7·28	1,740
11-14 years	9·27	2,220	7·72	1,845
15-18 years	11·51	2,755	8·83	2,110

The minimum cost of meeting these requirements would require a diet consisting entirely of the cheapest sources of energy such as lard, sugar or flour. Such a diet would not be recommended as it would not meet children's need for a balance of nutrients.

Abattoirs

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the abattoirs in England and Wales.

Mr. Soames: There are 468 red meat and 99 poultry abattoirs licensed in England and Wales at the present time. I am depositing a list of these today in the House Library. The licensed poultry abattoirs have been licensed under the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976, as amended, and the list is likely to change on 1 August 1994 when abattoirs will be licensed under the Poultry Meat, Farmed Game Bird Meat and Rabbit Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1994. These regulations will bring more poultry abattoirs into the list of licensed premises, and will require rabbit and farmed game bird meat abattoirs to be licensed for the first time.

Set Aside

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the percentage of set-aside land in each EC member state.

Mr. Jack: In 1993, the set-aside requirement in all member states was 15 per cent. of the area on which arable area payments were claimed under the main scheme. The percentage of land set aside in each member state as a percentage of the total area claimed under both the main and the simplified scheme is as follows:

	Per cent.
Belgium	4·63
Denmark	11·36
Federal Republic of Germany	11·40
Greece	1·34
Spain	10·78
France	12·30
Republic of Ireland	8·92
Italy	5·60
Luxembourg	5·56
Netherlands	2·40
Portugal	11·40
United Kingdom	13·98
EC (Total)	10·83

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether imported beef, cheese, butter and meat products from EEC countries are examined for bovine immunodeficiency virus; and what evidence of bovine immunodeficiency virus has been found.

Mr. Soames: Intra-Community trade in these commodities is governed by harmonised animal health rules, none of which currently provide for controls in respect of bovine immunodeficiency virus.

Food Labelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans her Department has to ensure that food labelling includes animal welfare criteria.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The Food Advisory Committee has recommended to the Government that information about methods of animal welfare should be conveyed to consumers by means other than labelling. The Government, therefore, have no plans to make statutory provision in this area, but have no objection to voluntary labelling schemes so long as the information is not presented misleadingly.

Diets and Nutrition

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list *(a)* the estimated average requirements recommended by the 1991 panel on dietary reference values of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, *(b)* the recommended daily amounts defined previously 1979 to 1991 and *(c)* the corresponding recommended daily amounts in the United States for energy for (i) males and females of different age and (ii) males and females of different age and different levels of activity, as defined in annex 4 of the 1991 panel report.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

In the report from the Committee of the Medical Aspects of Food Policy "Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom" published in 1991, the estimated average requirement—EAR—is defined as an overall energy expenditure as a multiple of basal metabolic rate. EARs for energy for children and adolescents, and for men and women, at different activity levels are given in tables 1.1, 2.5 and 2.7 of the report. Different EARs for energy for children under 10 years of age were not made according to activity level.

The 1979 COMA recommendations are listed in table 1 of the report "Recommended Daily Amounts of Food Energy and Nutrients for Groups of People in the United Kingdom". Copies of both reports are available in the Library. The 1989 United States recommended dietary allowances are shown in the table. The values in the three reports are derived in different ways and therefore are not directly comparable.

United States recommended dietary allowances for energy: 1989

Age (years)	Kilocalories daily
Infants	
0 – 0·5	650
0·5 – 1	850

Age (years)	Kilocalories daily
Children	
1 – 3	1,300
4 – 6	1,800
7 – 10	2,000
Males	
11 – 14	2,500
15 – 18	3,000
19 – 24	2,900
25 – 50	2,900
51 +	2,300
Females	
11 – 14	2,200
15 – 18	2,200
19 – 24	2,200
25 – 50	2,200
51 +	1,900

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research, with specific reference to children, she has commissioned to satisfy the recommendation made by the panel on dietary reference values of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy in 1991 on investigations to be carried out into nutrient requirements of the United Kingdom population, their nutritional status and methods for its measurement, particularly for the elderly and for children.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

As part of the national diet and nutrition survey programme, run jointly by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, a survey of children aged one and a half to four and a half years was completed in July 1993 and the report is expected to be published later this year. A survey of children aged five to 15 years is being planned. In 1993, the Department of Health and Medical Research Council's nutrition programme committee commissioned two research projects to examine the relationship between weight, height and nutritional status of children and their current and future health. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food also has research programmes on optimum nutrient status and on dietary surveys, including improvements in methodology.

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the difference in the energy requirements defined by her Department's dietary experts for a family with a boy aged eight and a girl aged six in which *(a)* both parents are unemployed and *(b)* both parents are in full-time employment; and what are the relative risks in each family of not being able to meet those requirements.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

Employment status is not known to have any direct influence on energy requirements.

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific information about the energy requirements of children of different ages in families with different levels of income has been issued by her Department in the 1990s.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

The report from the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy—COMA—"Dietary Reference Values for Food Energy and Nutrients for the United Kingdom", copies of which are available in the Library, provided estimates of average energy requirements by age, sex and activity level, but not income. Income is not known to influence energy requirements.

WALES

Schools (Road Safety)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will request the Curriculum Council for Wales to *(a)* undertake research into the current provision of road safety education in schools, *(b)* identify examples of good practice and *(c)* recommend how such good practice might be extended.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have plans to invite the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales to conduct such research.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider including training of teachers in road safety education as a national priority area in grants for education support and training.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details of the Welsh Office's 1995-96 grants for education support and training—GEST—programme were sent to local education authorities in June this year. Training in road safety education is not included in the programme which has been the subject of extensive consultations with LEAs. The Department will, in due course, consult LEAs on the priorities to be supported in the 1996-97 GEST programme and will consider any proposals for funding, including any relating to road safety education, as part of that exercise.

Child Care Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total public expenditure on child care services for pre-school children under the age of five years, by sector, including all local authority provision and grants to the voluntary sector, for each year from 1989-90 to 1993-94; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of gross domestic product for Wales in each of these years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information is not available in the form requested.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people work on the Welsh Development Agency industrial estates; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1986.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Cancer Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of cancer have been identified in each years in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of malignant neoplasms registered in each year since 1979 is given in the following table. Figures for 1990 and later years are not yet complete for all hospitals in Wales.

	All Malignant Neoplasms (ICD9 (140-208)
1979	12,456
1980	12,554
1981	12,642
1982	12,686
1983	13,737
1984	14,414
1985	14,848
1986	15,284
1987	15,241
1988	15,775
[1]1989	15,397

[1] Provisional
Source: Wales Cancer Registry

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for disabled people announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The Welsh Office contributed to its preparation. My right hon. Friend and I welcome the publication of this document and would encourage everyone with an interest in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views.

Out-of-school Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total public expenditure on out-of-school services for children from the age of five for each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Wales for each of these years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally. Grant of £24,022, £40,872 and £18,240 were paid to Kids Club Network in financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 respectively, from the Department's child and family services grant scheme. In 1993-94 the Department launched its out-of-school children grant initiative through the training and enterprise councils in Wales with a grant of £153,000.

Health Authorities (Legal Fees)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* East Dyfed, *(c)* Gwent, *(d)* Gwynedd, *(e)* Mid Glamorgan, *(f)* Pembrokeshire, *(g)* Powys and *(h)* West Glamorgan health authorities spent on legal fees in each year from 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

"Caring for the Future"

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of publishing "Caring for the Future"; and how many documents were published.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cost of publishing 25,000 copies of the English language version of "Caring for the Future" was £22,600, equivalent to 90p a copy. The cost of producing 2,000 copies of the Welsh language version was £5,700, equivalent to £2·85 a copy.

GP Lists (Removal of Patients)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details for each family health service authority area and for Wales as a whole of the number of patients removed from general practitioners' lists for the latest available year; and how many and what proportions of these were removed without their consent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available in the form requested. The following table shows the number of patients removed from general medical practitioners' lists in 1993 at the request of the doctor and the number of those who were re-allocated to another doctor in the same area by their family health services authority.

	Patients removed	*Patients reallocated*
Clwyd	532	[1]—
Dyfed	95	49
Gwent	244	126
Gwynedd	87	31
Mid Glamorgan	407	177
Powys	[2]6	[2]4
South Glamorgan	831	279
West Glamorgan	567	261
Wales Total	2,769	[3]927

[1] Not available.
[2] Financial year 1993-94.
[3] Excludes Clwyd.

Notes:

1. All figures shown in the table have been provided by individual authorities and have not been statistically validated.
2. Information on the specific numbers of patients removed from GPs' lists without their consent is not available. The table indicates the number of patients who transferred at the request of doctors and will include those who moved against their wishes. Other reasons for removal include patients who moved out of the practice area.
3. If the patient has been transferred more than once during the year he/she will have been counted each time.
4. Removals due to the death of the patient, emigration, adoption and the retirement of the doctor are not shown in the table.
5. Patients reallocated by the authority are those who were unable to find another doctor within the area willing to accept their registration.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the current annual budgets of all the grant-maintained schools in Wales; and what are the capital and revenue allocations made by him to each such school during the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: The annual maintenance grants, special purpose grants for development and capital grants allocated to grant-maintained schools in the current financial year are shown in the following table:

School	County	AMG £	SPG(D) £	Capital Grants Formula £	Capital Grants Projects £
Bryn Elian	Clwyd	1,682,885	37,750	27,100	250,000
Derwen	Clwyd	254,564	9,400	16,000	300,000
Eirias	Clwyd	2,301,715	55,100	34,040	280,000
Emrys ap Iwan	Clwyd	2,529,331	58,750	35,500	579,726
Maelor	Clwyd	1,223,319	26,300	22,520	99,681
Pen-y-Bryn	Clwyd	386,954	15,000	18,000	50,000
Brynmawr	Gwent	1,317,383	27,000	22,800	685,469
Cwmcarn	Gwent	881,624	18,000	19,200	262,729
Our Lady	Gwent	348,379	10,800	16,320	180,000
St. Albans	Gwent	1,339,177	29,250	23,700	606,000
Caergeiliog	Gwynedd	391,316	12,700	17,080	262,000
Llanerfyl	Powys	69,304	5,000	16,000	73,000
Mary Immaculate	South Glamorgan	1,423,755	30,550	24,220	—
St. Cyres	South Glamorgan	3,091,696	71,250	40,500	540,000
Stanwell	South Glamorgan	2,353,411	53,600	33,440	1,972,752
Bishop Vaughan	West Glamorgan	[1]2,309,330	48,350	31,340	594,283

[1]Provisional.

In addition, the Department would meet 50 per cent. of the school's premises insurance costs, and provide funding to help with the cost of VAT. Schools may also apply for a special purpose grant for restructuring in their first two years as a grant-maintained school.

West Wales Task Force

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that, if the proposed closure of proof and experimental establishment Pendine is confirmed, he will consider as included in the west Wales task force area those communities of east Carmarthenshire directly affected by any closure or cut back and increase the funding of the task force accordingly.

Mr. Redwood: The position of the communities most directly affected can be considered once the consultations with staff on the proposal for a phased run down are complete. The consultation period ends on 14 October.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the estimated average times which will be taken under the tariff scheme of the criminal injuries compensation scheme (i) to make a first decision, (ii) to deal with a case subject to internal review and (iii) to decide a case which goes to appeal; and what is his projection of the estimated percentage of cases which will be concluded within 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: No realistic averages are yet calculable. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the challenging performance targets which have been set for the new Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. These are set out at paragraph 11.2 of the guide to the tariff scheme, which was published in March. A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average award of the criminal injuries compensation scheme in *(a)* 1965, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* 1993 expressed at 1993 prices; and what annual real-terms rate of increase that represents.

Mr. Maclean: The following information has been calculated using data given at annexe A to the White paper "Compensating Victims of Violent Crime", Cm. 2434, published in December 1993.

At 1992-93 prices, the average award in 1964-65 was £2,737; in 1987-88, it was £3,376, and in 1992-93, it was £4,162. That represents an annual average rate of increase between 1964-65, and 1987-88 of 1 per cent. and between 1987-88 and 1992-93 of 5 per cent.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the staff required to administer the criminal injuries compensation tariff scheme in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97 will be paid over £35,000; and if he will publish a table of the grading of staff who presently administer the existing scheme and those required for the proposed scheme.

Mr. Maclean: It is expected that the number of staff administering the tariff scheme in the period 1994-97 who will earn more than £35,000 a year will be between two and four. The staff administering the two criminal injuries compensation schemes now, and the staff expected to be doing so at 31 March 1995, are set out in the following table. This does not include the 41 board members working on the old scheme.

Grade	Number now	Number at 31 March 1995
5	1	1
6 (Legal)	1	1
7	1	1
7 (Legal)	14	14
SEO	4	5
HEO	19	33
EO	55	54
TM	1	1
PS	3	3
AO	216	212
SGBI	1	1
SGBII	12	12
TYP	18	18
AA	88	94

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assumptions have been made in estimating future costs of both the existing scheme of criminal injuries compensation and the proposed tariff

scheme with particular reference to projected levels of violent crime, the numbers of victims and applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

Mr. Maclean: The assumptions used to calculate the future costs of an unreformed scheme were given in a written answer to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) on 6 July, *Official Report*, column *201*. In estimating the future costs of the tariff scheme, it was assumed that applications received would increase at a similar rate to an unreformed scheme and that the number of resolved cases attracting an award would be broadly the same. It was further assumed that the productivity improvements facilitated by the simpler tariff scheme would enable staff to resolve more cases.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much saving will be made in the criminal injuries compensation scheme in 1994-95; what proportion of victims will be adversely affected; and if he will make a statement on the basis for his calculations.

Mr. Maclean: It is currently expected that expenditure on compensation in 1994-95 will be some 10 per cent. higher than last year's figure of £166 million. The basis on which our forward costings are calculated has been explained again today in answer to other questions from the hon. Member. It has been estimated that, under the tariff scheme, 60 per cent. of claimants will receive as much as, or more than, they would have done under the old scheme.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the proposed remuneration arrangements for appeal panel members of the criminal injuries compensation scheme; how many person-days in each year it has been estimated will be necessary to deal with appeals; and what is the estimated total annual cost.

Mr. Maclean: It is currently expected that, when the residual old scheme cases have been cleared and the tariff scheme stands alone, some 40 to 50 appeals panel members will be required, sitting for an average of 40 to 50 days a year. Their remuneration will be at the same daily rate that members of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board receive when hearing appeals. Currently this is £259 a day. The annual cost is likely to be in the order of £500,000.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff will be required to administer the tariff scheme for the criminal injuries compensation scheme in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97.

Mr. Maclean: The White Paper "Compensating Victims of Violent Crime", (Cm 2434), explained at paragraph 30 that the old scheme and the tariff scheme would run in parallel for about two years, until the balance of old scheme cases had been resolved. The same administrative staff would work on both schemes, with a gradual cross-over of staff as the balance of work shifted from the old scheme to the new. This would keep the overall costs of administration as low as possible.

It is not possible to predict precisely how quickly this change over will occur or how many staff will notionally be working on one scheme or the other during any particular period.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many victims are likely to receive less money under the revised criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if he will break down the figures into bands *(a)* £500 to £1,000, *(b)* £1,000 to £5,000, *(c)* £5,000 to £10,000, *(d)* £10,000 to £50,000 and *(e)* over £50,000.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available in the form requested, but the following estimates are based on calculations using data from the sampling exercise undertaken to set the tariff.

About 8 per cent. of claimants might receive between £500 and £1,000 less under the tariff scheme than under the "old" scheme; about 15 per cent. might receive between £1,000 and £5,000 less; and about 4 per cent. might receive a payment lower by some £5,000 or more than it would otherwise have been.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the framework and frequency for upgrading the proposed tariffs under the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Paragraph 14 of the rules of the tariff scheme provides for the tariff to be revised from time to time by the Secretary of State; a copy of the rules was placed in the Library of the House.

Environmental Information Regulations 1992

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for information on animals held in captivity for scientific purposes have been made to his department citing the Environmental Information Regulations 1992; and how many were accepted as falling within the scope of the regulations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such requests have been received.

Driving Offences

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motorists were *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of (i) failure to accord precedence at pedestrian crossings, endorseable offences, (ii) failure to comply with traffic signs, (iii) speed limit offences, (iv) driving and so on after consuming alcohol or taking drugs and (v) reckless driving in (i) the Metropolitan police area of London and (ii) for England and Wales in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The available figures are as follows:

Number of proceedings and findings of guilt for certain motoring offences in England and Wales and the Metropolitan Police District 1990-1992

Year and offence	*Proceedings*		*Findings of guilt*	
	England and Wales	*Metropolitan police*	*England and Wales*	*Metropolitan police*
1990				
Neglect of pedestrian rights (endorsable offences)[1]	14,003	2,467	12,248	2,198
Failing to comply with traffic signs	25,358	3,181	21,253	2,779

Year and offence	Proceedings		Findings of guilt	
	England and Wales	Metropolitan police	England and Wales	Metropolitan police
Speed limit offences	173,163	9,501	163,477	9,187
Driving etc. after consuming alcohol or taking drugs	127,638	19,521	113,166	16,562
Reckless driving	11,270	629	7,647	500
1991				
Neglect of pedestrian rights (endorsable offences)[1]	14,003	3,883	11,771	3,143
Failing to comply with traffic signs	32,705	5,446	27,529	4,171
Speed limit offences	168,980	13,002	156,804	11,870
Driving etc. after consuming alcohol or taking drugs	118,584	19,378	103,821	16,031
Reckless driving	11,940	878	7,690	600
1992				
Neglect of pedestrian rights (endorsable offences)[1]	12,898	4,423	10,433	3,368
Failing to comply with traffic signs	40,077	9,722	34,229	7,769
Speed limit offences	161,352	14,376	148,493	12,471
Driving etc. after consuming alcohol or taking drugs	110,208	17,319	95,207	13,876
Reckless driving	11,040	964	6,849	535

[1] Includes also offences of neglect of pedestrian rights in controlled areas, on pelican crossings, in playstreets etc. in addition to zebra and pedestrian crossings.
Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Betting Offices

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for changes in the controls on the displays and facilities in licensed betting offices.

Mr. Howard: I have carefully considered the responses to last year's consultation exercise on changes to the controls on the displays and facilities in licensed betting offices. I have now decided to ease these controls, so as to give consumers greater choice and lighten the burden on the betting industry.

Since betting offices were first permitted in 1961, they have been required to operate behind obscured windows. In addition, licensees have not been allowed to advertise their services on shop windows or to display any moving text or images. Since 1986, betting offices have been allowed to provide a very limited range of refreshments and television sets have been permitted, but with restrictions on screen size and positioning so as not to be seen from outside.

I propose that, in future, betting offices should be able to have clear windows and to provide a wider range of pre-packed snacks and sandwiches. They would be free to display information on the facilities available in their premises, the events on which betting is taking place, the range of bets available, and the odds offered on any particular event. In addition, the current restriction on the maximum size of television screens in betting offices would be lifted, as would the ban on displays incorporating moving text.

I hope to bring these changes before the House later in the year.

Bail (Amendment) Act 1993

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what effect the powers available to prosecutors under the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 are being put since it came into force on 27 June.

Mr. Maclean: It is too early to draw conclusions, and I cannot comment on individual cases, but it has been reported that prosecutors made use of the powers—which allow an appeal against the granting of bail by a magistrates court—the day after the Act came into force, and as a result a defendant continued in custody.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has received from the Animal Procedures Committee in respect of regulatory toxicity; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has received the Committee's report on this subject, which was based on the work of the sub-committee chaired by Dr. Onora O'Neill, principal of Newnham college, Cambridge. I am grateful to Dr. O'Neill and the other members of the sub-committee for the efforts that they have put in to this difficult and important subject. The Home Office will be consulting with regulatory and other interested bodies about the committee's recommendations. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Additional copies of the report can be obtained from the Home Office Publications Unit, Room 1024, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT (£2·00 plus postage and packing).

Immigration

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the effects of recent European Union visa proposals on controls on third-country nationals seeking to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 13 July, the Commission outlined in a press statement proposals relating to a uniform format for visas, for which there is provision in article 100c of the treaty of Rome. The Commission has yet to publish its proposals. When it does so, they will be made available to Parliament in accordance with the normal scrutiny requirements.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance from *(a)* wives, *(b)* husbands, *(c)* fiancés and *(d)* fiancées made at British posts in (1) New Delhi, (2) Bombay, (3) Calcutta, (4) Madras, (5) Dhaka, (6) Islamabad, (7) Karachi and (8) Colombo for each quarter since January

1993 were *(m)* received, *(n)* granted and *(o)* refused; how many refusals at each post were (i) wholly and (ii) partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration; how many refusals at each post were (i) wholly and (ii) partly because the visa officer was not satisfied that the couple could support and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds; what was the refusal rate at each post; and what percentage of those refusals were *(x)* wholly and *(y)* partly on primary purpose grounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the Indian sub-continent for each quarter of 1993 and for the first quarter of 1994 is given in the tables. Where the numbers are small, figures for individual posts have been combined. Information on reasons for refusals is not compiled for periods shorter than 12 months. Corresponding information for Colombo is not available centrally.

Table 1
Spouses and fiancé(e)s in the Indian sub-continent applying for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom 1993 and first quarter 1994

Number of persons and percentage

	1993					1994
	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Year*	*Q1*
Husbands						
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	70	70	70	80	280	90
Applications granted[2]	60	50	50	60	210	60
Applications refused initially	30	20	40	40	120	50
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	32	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	100	100	70	60	340	100
Applications granted[2]	70	70	70	70	280	70
Applications refused initially	30	50	40	40	160	50
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	27	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	320	260	230	260	1,060	270
Applications granted[2]	310	210	180	260	960	230
Applications refused initially	80	50	60	120	310	130
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	22	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	770	660	610	600	2,640	750
Applications granted[2]	660	480	470	380	1,990	440
Applications refused initially	550	470	460	410	1,900	310
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	43	n/a
Wives						
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	260	240	190	180	880	320
Applications granted[2]	160	150	200	220	720	220
Applications refused initially	40	30	60	50	180	60
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	380	270	200	210	1,060	330
Applications granted[2]	130	280	280	180	940	240
Applications refused initially	20	30	30	40	120	50
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	420	360	310	290	1,380	330[4]
Applications granted[2]	290	190	240	460	1,180	300
Applications refused initially	60	50	40	40	190	40
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	880	760	770	290	3,020	910
Applications granted[2]	780	610	600	460	2,390	600
Applications refused initially	160	130	180	40	620	70
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	n/a

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Applications refused initially, minus applications granted on appeal, as a percentage of applications decided.
[4] Five or fewer; — nil; n/a not applicable.

Number of persons and percentage

	1993 Q1	1993 Q2	1993 Q3	1993 Q4	1993 Year	1994 Q1
Male fiancés						
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	30	30	20	30	110	30
Applications granted[2]	20	[4]—	10	10	30	10
Applications refused initially	30	20	20	20	100	40
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	74	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	30	30	10	20	90	40
Applications granted[2]	20	20	20	30	90	20
Applications refused initially	30	30	20	20	100	20
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	36	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	—	10	10
Applications granted[2]	—	[4]—	[4]—	—	[4]—	[4]—
Applications refused initially	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	10	[4]—
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	73	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	40	40	40	30	140	30
Applications granted[2]	30	30	20	20	100	20
Applications refused initially	30	30	40	20	120	20
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	47	n/a
Female fiancées						
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications received[1]	40	40	40	30	140	40
Applications granted[2]	30	10	20	20	80	30
Applications refused initially	20	10	10	10	50	20
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	37	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications received[1]	40	30	30	30	120	40
Applications granted[2]	20	30	30	30	110	20
Applications refused initially	[4]—	[4]—	10	10	30	10
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications received[1]	[4]—	10	10	[4]—	20	[4]—
Applications granted[2]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	10	[4]—
Applications refused initially	—	—	[4]—	—	[4]—	[4]—
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications received[1]	50	40	60	60	200	30
Applications granted[2]	30	40	30	30	120	20
Applications refused initially	10	[4]—	10	10	30	10
Refusal rate (percentage)[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	n/a

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Applications refused initially, minus applications granted on appeal, as a percentage of applications decided.
[4] Five or fewer; — nil; n/a not applicable.

Table 2

Spouses and fiancé(e)s in the Indian sub-continent refused entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom, 1993

Number of persons and percentages

	Number refused because couple could not accommodate/ maintain themselves without recourse to public funds		*Number refused because primary purpose of marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom*		*Primary purpose refusals as a percentage of all refusals*	
	Solely for these reasons	*Partly for these reasons*	*Solely for these reasons*	*Partly for these reasons*	*Solely on primary purpose grounds*	*Partly on primary purpose grounds*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Husbands	10	20	60	20	50	15
Wives	10	40	90	40	47	22
Male fiancés	[2]—	[2]—	70	[2]—	74	4
Female fiancées	[2]—	[2]—	40	10	67	16
Bombay (including Madras)						
Husbands	[2]—	20	60	20	36	15

	Number refused because couple could not accommodate/ maintain themselves without recourse to public funds		Number refused because primary purpose of marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom		Primary purpose refusals as a percentage of all refusals	
	Solely for these reasons	Partly for these reasons	Solely for these reasons	Partly for these reasons	Solely on primary purpose grounds	Partly on primary purpose grounds
Wives	20	20	40	20	31	15
Male fiancés	[3]—	[3]—	60	[3]—	57	14
Female fiancées	[3]—	[3]—	10	[3]—	38	19
Dhaka						
Husbands	110	80	110	50	36	16
Wives	110	30	10	10	4	4
Male fiancés	[3]—	[3]—	10	[3]—	[1]82	[1]18
Female fiancées	[2]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[1]50	[1]50
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Husbands	320	880	560	880	30	46
Wives	370	80	40	60	7	10
Male fiancés	10	50	40	50	35	46
Female fiancées	10	10	[3]—	10	7	29
Total Indian sub-continent						
Husbands	440	1,000	800	970	32	39
Wives	510	170	180	130	16	12
Male fiancés	10	50	180	60	55	17
Female fiancées	10	20	50	20	45	20

[1] Percentages based on fewer than 15 applications refused.
[2] Nil.
[3] Five or fewer.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for registration as British citizens of children born in the United Kingdom on or after 1 January 1983 have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted or *(c)* refused since 1 January 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Some 2,063 children born in the United Kingdom on or after 1 January 1983 have been registered as British citizens since 1 January 1993. The numbers of such applications received and refused are not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* adult registration with entitlement, *(b)* naturalisation on grounds of residence, *(c)* naturalisation on grounds of marriage and *(d)* registration of minors his Department estimates it (i) will receive and (ii) expects to grant in 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The latest estimate of the numbers of citizenship applications likely to be received and granted in 1994-95 is as follows:

	Intake	Applications granted
Adult registration	4,200	5,100
Naturalisation (residence)	17,000	12,750
Naturalisation (marriage)	14,200	12,950
Minor registrations	4,600	9,100
TOTAL	40,000	39,900

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Turkey, *(c)* Morocco, *(d)* the United States of America, *(e)* Australia, *(f)* Malaysia, *(g)* Hong Kong, *(h)* Guyana, *(i)* Trinidad, *(j)* Colombia and *(k)* Algeria were (i) granted and (ii) refused permission to enter the United Kingdom at ports of entry in each quarter since January 1993, and in total, to the nearest available date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested for 1993 is given in the table; corresponding data for quarters of 1994 are not yet available.

Passenger admissions[1] and persons refused leave to enter and removed, for selected nationalities in 1993

Nationality	1st quarter 1993		2nd quarter 1993		3rd quarter 1993		4th quarter 1993		Year 1993	
	Admissions	Refused and removed	Admissions	Refused and removed	Admissions	Refused and removed	Admissions	Refused and removed	Admissions	Refused and removed
Jamaica	5,490	114	6,610	119	9,600	98	5,330	157	27,000	488
Turkey	20,800	59	19,700	59	33,200	50	23,100	65	96,800	233
Morocco	3,720	9	4,600	18	6,660	27	3,860	21	18,800	75
USA	515,000	227	793,000	245	930,000	257	627,000	257	2,870,000	986
Australia	78,400	58	141,000	72	161,000	53	114,000	60	494,000	243
Malaysia	17,200	58	29,000	110	37,700	106	26,200	80	110,000	354
Hong Kong[3]	17,800	20	23,100	27	36,000	34	13,700	9	90,600	90
Guyana	1,090	18	1,590	20	2,310	23	1,250	16	6,230	77
Trinidad and Tobago	3,140	16	4,150	19	7,090	17	3,570	17	18,000	69
Colombia	4,180	74	5,800	72	6,620	106	5,320	104	21,900	356
Algeria	3,050	43	3,560	48	5,890	60	3,590	60	16,100	211

[1] Rounded figures, numbers of journeys.
[2] Excluding Hong Kong stateless persons.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in (i) Dhaka and (ii) Islamabad were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused, *(d)* deferred at first interview, *(e)* lapsed and *(f)* outstanding and awaiting first interview for each quarter since the beginning of 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is given in the table.

Applications for entry clearance for settlement made by wives and children in Dhaka and Islamabad, 1993 to 1994

	1993					1994
	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Year*	*Q1*
Applications newly received[1]						
Dhaka	720	660	580	550	2,510	580
Islamabad	1,020	870	960	760	3,620	1,040
Applications granted[2]						
Dhaka	540	410	440	610	2,000	490
Islamabad	850	730	690	430	2,700	620
Applications refused initially						
Dhaka	270	200	130	110	710	200
Islamabad	200	170	240	200	810	100
Applications withdrawn or lapsed						
Dhaka	20	[3]—	20	20	60	60
Islamabad	80	40	80	50	250	40
Applications outstanding at end of period						
Dhaka	2,340	2,410	2,410	2,240	2,240	2,090
Islamabad	1,990	1,980	2,020	2,170	2,170	2,510
Applications awaiting first interview at end of period						
Dhaka	980	1,450	1,720	1,670	1,670	1,700
Islamabad	760	890	890	1,060	1,060	1,010

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Five or fewer.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers arriving at United Kingdom ports of entry during 1993 and the first quarter of 1994 were referred to port medical inspectors for examination; what are the most common diagnoses made; and how many people have been *(a)* refused entry (i) wholly or (ii) partly on medical grounds and for what medical reason or *(b)* required to report for further medical treatment after entry and for what medical reason.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two passengers were refused entry principally on medical grounds in 1993. Corresponding information for the first quarter of 1994 is not yet available. The other information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under Immigration Act powers applied to the Home Office to be allowed to depart voluntarily under *(a)* the supervised departure provisions and *(b)* the voluntary departure provisions of the immigration rules in each quarter since January 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The readily available information relates to persons subject to deportation action who were removed under the supervised departure procedures, or left voluntarily, and persons dealt with as illegal entrants who left voluntarily. This information is given in the table. Most of these persons will have been detained prior to departure. A number will have been subject to restrictions as an alternative to detention, but such cases could be separately identified only at disproportionate cost.

	1993					1994	
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*	*2nd quarter*
Persons subject to deportation action:							
Supervised departures	363	287	300	268	1,218	244	191
Departed voluntarily	37	46	37	76	196	25	21
Illegal entrants:							
Departed voluntarily	68	85	114	117	384	85	80

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives and *(c)* dependent children have been refused (i) extension of stay and (ii) settlement in the United Kingdom on the grounds that the Secretary of State is not satisfied that they can be maintained and accommodated without recourse to public funds, in each quarter since January 1993, and in total.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relating to after entry cases is given in the table. Information on dependent children is not readily available.

Refusals[1] on grounds of maintenance and accommodation, of after-entry applications by husbands and wives (numbers of persons)

	Refusals to grant probationary year on grounds of:			
	Accomodation	*Maintenance*	*Maintenance and accommodation*	*Refusals of settlement after probationary year[2]*
1993				
QUARTER 1				
Husbands	—	1	—	14
Wives	—	1	—	17
QUARTER 2				
Husbands	—	2	—	8
Wives	1	3	1	13
QUARTER 3				
Husbands	—	—	—	5
Wives	—	1	1	6
QUARTER 4				
Husbands	—	1	3	6
Wives	—	—	2	6
1994				
QUARTER 1				
Husbands	—	—	—	12
Wives	—	2	—	2

[1] Excluding dependents.
[2] Refusals of settlement after probationary year on general considerations, including recourse to public funds.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many appeals under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 where cases have been dismissed but with a recommendation to the Home Office to reconsider the Home Office has *(a)* followed and *(b)* not followed the recommendation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people, by country, were granted exceptional leave to enter or to remain in each month of 1992, 1993 and 1994 to the latest convenient date; and how many of these were granted such leave because of *(a)* the situation in the country from which they claimed asylum or *(b)* the length of time the Home Office had taken to decide on their case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1992 to end June 1994, by quarter, on the number of grants of exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom, by nationality, is given in the table. Information on the reasons for which exceptional leave to remain is granted is not readily available.

Cases[1,2] not recognised as refugees but granted exceptional leave, excluding dependants, by nationality, 1992 to 1994 (2nd quarter)
Number of grants to principal applicants

	1992				*1993*				*1994*	
Nationality	*1st Qtr*	*2nd Qtr*	*3rd Qtr*	*4th Qtr*	*1st Qtr*	*2nd Qtr*	*3rd Qtr*	*4th Qtr*	*1st Qtr*	*2nd Qtr*
Europe and Americas										
Bulgaria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	*	*
Colombia	—	*	5	*	*	*	*	*	*	5
Romania	5	*	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	—
Turkey	80	40	445	970	560	235	40	20	30	5
Former USSR	*	—	*	—	*	*	—	—	—	5
Former Yugoslavia	—	—	*	—	—	*	5	45	220	385
Others	*	*	5	*	5	*	*	—	—	*
Total	90	45	455	970	565	240	55	65	255	400
Africa										
Angola	—	—	*	5	*	—	*	—	—	—
Benin	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cameroon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Congo	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ethiopia	30	425	855	900	1,465	75	25	10	10	20
Ghana	5	5	10	5	—	*	5	*	—	20
Nigeria[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	*	5	5	*	5
Sierra Leone[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—	—	*	*	—	5
Somalia	470	505	720	510	1,200	1,280	265	330	320	305
Sudan	5	5	25	80	20	425	15	5	5	5
Togo and Ivory Coast	—	—	—	—	—	*	*	*	—	—
Uganda	5	5	175	975	805	295	15	5	10	5
Zaire	*	*	*	5	5	5	*	5	—	*

Nationality	1992 1st Qtr	1992 2nd Qtr	1992 3rd Qtr	1992 4th Qtr	1993 1st Qtr	1993 2nd Qtr	1993 3rd Qtr	1993 4th Qtr	1994 1st Qtr	1994 2nd Qtr
Others	5	5	25	50	175	120	30	25	20	20
Total	520	960	1,810	2,530	3,865	2,205	365	390	370	380
Middle East										
Iran	50	15	280	260	65	55	5	5	5	5
Iraq	60	40	455	655	145	95	45	20	50	85
Lebanon	25	5	70	505	185	70	15	5	5	5
Others	20	5	30	70	55	30	10	5	15	10
Total	150	70	835	1,495	455	245	70	30	75	100
Asia										
China	5	*	*	10	—	5	*	*	*	*
India	185	85	125	65	20	5	5	*	5	20
Pakistan	180	80	90	50	25	5	5	*	5	10
Sri Lanka	270	460	2,060	1,475	2,285	80	30	25	20	25
Others	100	50	65	30	65	10	5	5	*	5
Total	740	680	2,345	1,630	2,395	105	45	35	35	65
Other, and nationality not known	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grand Total	1,500	1,755	5,445	6,625	7,285	2,790	530	520	730	950

[1] Information is of initial determination decisions, excluding the outcome appeals or other subsequent decisions.
[2] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2.
[3] Figures for 1992 not separately identified = n/a. Included in Others.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the *(a)* passengers in total and *(b)* persons treated as illegal entrants who were granted temporary admission/release in 1993 subsequently absconded; and how many (i) later reported voluntarily to the immigration authorities and (ii) were rearrested.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relates to the number of persons who absconded, either from detention or by failing to respond to the terms of temporary admission/release, and is given in the table. The other information requested is not available.

Absconders in 1993

Category of person	Number of persons
Passengers[1]	667
Illegal entrants	218

[1] May include some absconders recorded as "illegal entrants".

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many DNA tests to prove family relationships for immigration purposes have been carried out under the Home Office-funded scheme during *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1994, listed by country of origin; what was the average waiting period for the test and for its results: and in how many of those tests the family relationships were proved to be as claimed by the applicants.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is given in the table.

The average waiting time from the taking of a blood sample to a decision being made on DNA tests is six to eight weeks.

DNA tests on children under the Government scheme, results received and outcomes 1993 to Q1 1994

Number of children

Country/post where application made	Number of tests carried out	Tests offered but not taken	Number awaiting results at end of period	Number of results received	Outcomes: Related as claimed to both parents	Outcomes: Related as claimed to one parent but not other	Outcomes: Not related as claimed to either parent
1993							
Indian sub-continent[1,2]	1,306	20	616	1,214	1,050	60	89
Bangladesh (Dhaka)[2]	793	5	361	824	712	32	65
Pakistan (Islamabad, Karachi)	409	12	242	350	300	27	23
India (Bombay, New Delhi)	104	3	13	40	38	1	1
Outside of Indian sub-continent[3]	138	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Ethiopia (Addis Ababa)	23	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Ghana (Accra)	25	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Jamaica (Kingston)	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Kenya (Nairobi)	11	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Nigeria (Lagos)	43	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Philippines (Manila)	8	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Turkey (Istanbul)	1	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Thailand (Bangkok)	5	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Uganda (Kampala)	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Yemen (Sana'a)	11	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Country/post where application made	Number of tests carried out	Tests offered but not taken	Number awaiting results at end of period	Number of results received	Outcomes Related as claimed to both parents	Related as claimed to one parent but not other	Not related as claimed to either parent
Q1 1994							
Indian sub-continent[4 5]							
Bangladesh (Dhaka)[5]	289	9	340	303	274	7	20
Pakistan (Islamabad, Karachi)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
India (Bombay, New Delhi)[5]	15	—	34	13	9	—	—
Outside of Indian sub-continent[3]	54	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Ethiopia (Addis Ababa)	28	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Kenya (Nairobi)	9	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Nigeria (Lagos)	7	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Philippines (Manila)	4	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Thailand (Bangkok)	4	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Turkey (Istanbul)	7	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
United Arab Emirates (Dubai)	2	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

N/a Not available.
— Nil return.
[1] In 1993, nine tests have also been carried out in Calcutta and one in Madras.
[2] Includes 15 tests in Dhaka for which the outcome is not known.
[3] Refers to the number of tests for which an invoice has been received.
[4] In the first quarter of 1994, three tests wer also carried out in Calcutta.
[5] Includes four tests in Bombay, and two in Dhaka for which the outcome is not known.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were waiting for special quota vouchers in *(a)* India, *(b)* east Africa and *(c)* the rest of the world in (i) May 1993 and (ii) December 1993; when those issued with vouchers on those dates had applied; how many vouchers were issued in (1) India, (2) east Africa and (3) the rest of the world in (A) 1993 and (B) the first quarter of 1994; when those applying now can expect to receive vouchers; and how many applicants there were for vouchers in *(v)* India and *(w)* East Africa and *(x)* the rest of the world in *(y)* 1993 and *(z)* the first half of 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information which is currently available is given in the tables.

Table 1. Persons applying for a special voucher for entry to the United Kingdom, 1993 and Q1 1994

Number of persons

Country of application	Applications newly received		Vouchers issued		Applications awaiting a decision at end of	
	1993	Q1 1994	1993	Q1 1994	Q2 1993	Q4 1993
India	230	40	300	—	40	40
Kenya	190	40	160	40	30	90
Tanzania	15	—	10	10	60	60
Malawi	—[1]	n/a	—[1]	n/a	—	n/a
Zambia	10	—[2]	10	—[2]	10	—[2]
Rest of the world	10	—	10	—	—	—
Total	450	80	490	40	140	200

[1] Includes applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.
[2] 5 or fewer.
n/a Not available.
— nil.

Table 2. Waiting times for persons applying for a special voucher

Months

	Waiting times to main interview for persons interviewed at end of Q2 1993	Waiting times to main interview for persons interviewed at end of Q4 1993	Persons applying at end of[1] Q1 1994
India	3	3	—
Kenya	2	0·25	0·25
Tanzania	1	1	1
Malawi	—	—	n/a
Zambia	—	—	—
Rest of the world	—	—	—

[1] Data relate to expected waiting times.
n/a Not available.
— nil

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained under Immigration Act powers for a period of more than two months on completion of a custodial sentence during 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Some 55 people who completed a custodial sentence in 1993 were detained for more than two months under deportation powers. This figure does not include those subject to removal as illegal entrants, in relation to whom the information is not readily available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many operations against people alleged to be in the United Kingdom illegally involving both immigration officers and police took place during 1993, and 1994 to the latest convenient date; and for each operation by date, and by name how many *(a)* immigration officers and *(b)* police officers were involved; how many people were arrested and found to be (i) legally in the United Kingdom, (ii) in breach of immigration conditions, (iii) alleged illegal entrants and (iv) British citizens; how many requested and were granted legal advice before interview; how many were detained for *(x)* one day or less, *(y)* between a day and a week and *(z)* over a week; and how many have subsequently left the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Joint immigration service/police operations are undertaken at local level, and many are on a relatively small scale. Information in the form requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding immigration applications there are at Lunar house, at the latest convenient date from *(a)* students, *(b)* family members in the United Kingdom applying for variation of stay, *(c)* settlement entry clearance applications referred from overseas posts and *(d)* asylum seekers; and what are the average times applicants in each category might expect to wait before a decision.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is that at the end of June 1994 there were in total about 24,500 cases in the general immigration case-working groups, including referred entry clearance applications, the majority of which were under consideration or the subject of further inquiries, and about 50,000 cases in the asylum and special cases division.

The estimated average length of time between the receipt of the application and the decision, for cases decided in case-working groups, in the first quarter of 1994, was about two months for students and about 13 months for asylum applications. Information on average waiting times for family members in the United Kingdom for variation of leave and for settlement entry clearance applications referred from overseas posts is not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from over-age reapplicants from the Indian sub-continent seeking to join a sponsor settled in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* made, *(b)* deferred, *(c)* refused and *(d)* granted in 1993 and the first quarter of 1994; and how many such reapplicants in each category had undergone successful DNA tests.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people during 1993 and the first quarter of 1994 were *(a)* required to undergo a medical examination and *(b)* refused entry clearance abroad, and in which countries, for (i) settlement and (ii) other purposes on medical grounds; and what are the most common medical grounds for refusal.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of passengers detained overnight under Immigration Act powers during *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1994 by nationality.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested for 1993 is given in the tables; corresponding information for the first quarter of 1994 is not yet available.

Passengers[1] detained overnight or longer in 1993, by nationality

Geographical region and nationality[2]	*Number of persons*
All nationalities	5,571
European Community	79
Belgium	3
Denmark	1
France	36
Germany	—
Greece	1
Italy	4
Luxembourg	—
Netherlands	10
Portugal	24
Spain	—
Other Western Europe	333
Austria	5
Cyprus	51
Finland	4
Malta	4
Norway	3
Sweden	7
Switzerland	3
Turkey	192
Yugoslav passport holders	64
Eastern Europe	311
Bulgaria	9
Czechoslovak passport holders	26
Hungary	22
Poland	144
Romania	78
USSR passport holders	32
Americas	589
Argentina	8
Barbados	7
Brazil	72
Canada	30
Chile	1
Colombia	136
Guyana	18
Jamaica	194
Mexico	10
Peru	27
Trinidad and Tobago	8
United States of America	67
Venezeula	11
Africa	2,209
Algeria	131
Angola	55
Egypt	5
Ethiopia	70

Geographical region and nationality[2]	Number of persons
Ghana	419
Kenya	152
Libya	38
Mauritius	28
Morocco	18
Nigeria	575
Sierra Leone	207
Somalia	148
South Africa	57
Sudan	14
Tanzania	66
Tunisia	6
Uganda	46
Zaire	145
Zambia	15
Zimbabwe	14
Indian sub-continent	397
Bangladesh	117
India	136
Pakistan	144
Middle East	113
Iran	26
Iraq	36
Israel	10
Jordan	2
Kuwait	4
Lebanon	21
Saudi Arabia	7
Syria	4
Yemen	3
Remainder of Asia	385
China	78
Hong Kong[3]	17
Indonesia	2
Japan	8
Malaysia	67
Philippines	9
Singapore	11
South Korea	12
Sri Lanka	181
Thailand	—
Australasia	12
Australia	9
New Zealand	3
Others	1,143
British Overseas Citizens	34
Other countries not elsewhere specified	727
Stateless	382

[1] Includes some illegal entrants and deportees.
[2] Or claimed nationality where the nationality is in doubt.
[3] Excluding Hong Kong stateless persons.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations are carried out by Her Majesty's Government into the background of residents of the republics of the former Soviet Union when considering visa applications.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

Entry clearance officers must be satisfied that all visa applicants, irrespective of their nationality, meet the requirements of the immigration rules before visas may be issued. In some cases, this will require inquiries to be made locally, in the United Kingdom, and/or of other overseas posts.

Hong Kong

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (i) British nationals and (ii) holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong have been admitted to the United Kingdom in each quarter since January 1993 as *(a)* persons of independent means, *(b)* self-employed persons, *(c)* business people, *(d)* visitors, *(e)* students, *(f)* husbands and fiancés, *(g)* wives and fiancées and *(h)* other dependent relatives.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information for British dependent territories citizens and British nationals overseas, from Hong Kong is given in the table. Corresponding data for quarters of 1994 are not yet available. Data on admissions of holders of certificates of identity from Hong Kong are not available.

Admissions to the United Kingdom of BDTCs and BN(O)s from Hong Kong in 1993

Admission category	1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter	Year
Visitors:					
Ordinary	7,350	13,500	20,900	8,160	50,000
Business	1,680	2,090	1,790	1,220	6,780
Students	530	370	5,630	810	7,340
Husbands and fiancés[2]	[1]—	10	10	[1]—	20
Wives and fiancées[2]	40	30	30	10	110
Parents and grandparents[2]	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10
Children[2]	10	10	20	10	50

[1] 5 or fewer.
[2] Seeking, or accepted for, settlement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for naturalisation have been made under the provisions of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990; and how many of them were *(a)* decided, *(b)* granted, *(c)* refused and *(d)* withdrawn, under each class and category of the scheme, in each quarter since January 1993 and in total throughout the existence of the scheme; and how many of these applications were from (i) heads of households or (ii) family members.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As at 30 June 1994, 108,502 applications had been received from heads of households. Information about family members is available only in respect of applications granted. Tables giving the other information requested are too lengthy to be printed in the *Official Report* and, therefore, copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

In the July to September 1993 quarter, a number of appplications previously refused were reopened, to replace applications that had been withdrawn. The number of refusals relating to that quarter has been reduced by the

total number of reopened cases, which has resulted in negative refusal figures appearing for some occupational groups. The decisions subsequently reached in the reopened cases have been counted in the quarters in which they were made.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum were made *(a)* at ports of entry and *(b)* to the Immigration and Nationality Department in each quarter since January 1993; how many asylum applications have been (i) decided, (ii) granted, (iii) refused but exceptional leave granted or (iv) refused in each quarter; and how many applications are pending at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1993 and the first half of 1994 on the number of applications for asylum by location of application, and on decisions made, is given in the table. At the end of June 1994, the estimated number of applications for asylum outstanding was 50,040.

Applications[1] for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions[1,2] 1993 to Q2 1994

Number of principal applicants

	1993				1994	
	1st Quarter	*2nd Quarter*	*3rd Quarter*	*4th Quarter*	*1st Quarter*	*2nd Quarter*
Applications for asylum[3]	5,905	5,535	5,280	5,650	7,110	7,620
Applied at port	1,560	1,640	1,875	2,245	2,260	2,280
Applied in country	4,345	3,895	3,405	3,400	4,850	5,340
Decisions[2,3,4]	12,085	5,500	2,555	3,265	4,365	4,995
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[5]	740	545	160	150	180	205
Port	135	100	55	35	55	80
In country	605	440	100	110	125	125
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain	7,285	2,790	530	520	730	950
Port	3,770	1,380	215	240	335	495
In country	3,415	1,510	315	280	395	455
Total refusals	4,065	2,165	1,870	2,590	3,460	3,840
Refused asylum and ELR—after full consideration	810	835	1,450	1,605	2,860	3,010
Port	305	150	575	625	1,010	995
In country	600	585	875	980	1,845	2,015
Refused under para. 180F[6]	3,125	1,130	265	720	360	590
Port	—	—	—	—	—	—
In country	3,125	1,130	265	720	360	590
Refused on safe third country grounds[7]	130	200	150	265	240	240
Port	130	200	140	250	230	230
In country	—	—	5	20	10	10

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5.
[2] Information is of initial determination decisions excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions.
[3] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.
[4] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[5] Excludes South East Asian refugees.
[6] Paragraph 101 prior to 26 July 1993. For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity.
[7] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how long people who applied for asylum in *(a)* June 1992, *(b)* June 1993 and *(c)* June 1994 can expect to wait for a decision on their case;

(2) what was the average length of time in 1992, 1993 and 1994 at the latest convenient date that asylum applicants had waited for a decision on their case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For asylum applications resolved in 1992, 1993 and up to the end of June 1994, the average estimated length of time taken to reach a decision was 19·3 months, 18·8 months and 14·2 months respectively; and for applications received since the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993—26 July 1993 to 30 June 1994—3·6 months.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for entry clearance in order to seek asylum in the United Kingdom were *(a)* received and *(b)* granted by country during 1993 and the first quarter of 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Deportations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were recommended for deportation with no custodial sentence during *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994 to the latest convenient date; and in how many such cases the courts directed release (i) subject to conditions and (ii) without conditions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During 1993, 13 people were recommended for deportation by the courts with no custodial sentence and 14 during the first half of 1994. The other information requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average period of time for which a person has been held on remand in custody in prisons in England and Wales during the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: Estimates for the average number of days in custody in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales are published in table 2.1 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1992", Cm. 2581, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. For the 12 months ending May, the average number of days in custody for untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners is provisionally estimated to be 56 days and 37 days respectively.

Property Investment (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations are carried out by Her Majesty's Government into the background of foreign nationals wishing to invest in property in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under the immigration rules a person may be refused leave to enter on the ground that his exclusion is conducive to the public good, in the light of his character, conduct or associations. Inquiries into these matters are made where there is reason to do so, but there are no special arrangements in respect of people seeking admission with a view to investing in property.

Extraditions (United States)

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last 30 years the Home Secretary has refused a request by the United States for extradition from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: In the past 30 years, the Secretary of States has not refused any request from the United States which has been considered and approved by the courts; but on at least two occasions his decision to order surrender to the USA has been set aside by the High Court in judicial review proceedings.

Immigration Detention Centres

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held in either prisons or immigration detention centres in England and Wales on 8 July 1994.

Mr. Maclean: On 8 July 1994, there were 47,391 males and 1,842 females held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. A further 83 males were held in police cells. Information on immigration offenders relates to those detained on 14 July and shows that there were 353 males and 45 females detained in immigration service accommodation. A further 38 males and 10 females were held in police cells for immigration offences on that date.

Criminal Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is his policy to encourage enforced subject access to crimninal records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It is not our policy to encourage enforced subject access to criminal records.

Prisoners (Movement)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria followed by his Department as to the movement of prisoners from one establishment to another; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 19 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the criteria followed as to the movement of prisoners from one establishment to another.

There is a wide range of factors which are considered when prisoners are moved from one establishment to another. These include whether the prisoner is unconvicted or sentenced, age, sex, security categorisation, type of offence, length of sentence, training or treatment needs, educational requirements, medical requirements, maintenance of control and good order, full utilisation of available accommodation, and the need to maintain family ties and prepare prisoners for release.

Citizenship

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many minor children born to a British overseas citizen parent outside the United Kingdom have *(a)* been registered or *(b)* been refused registration as (i) a British citizen or (ii) a British overseas citizen in each year since 1 January 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. Minor children may apply for registration as British overseas citizens under section 27 of the British Nationality Act 1981. The numbers of grants made under this section, most of which will have been made to minor children born abroad to a British overseas citizen parent, are as follows:

	Numbers
1992	18
1993	7
1994	0

Prisons (Surplus Cell Capacity)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that had surplus cell capacity as of 8 July.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 19 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about surplus cell capacity.

The attached list shows the prisons which held a smaller number of prisoners than their certified normal accommodation on 8 July 1994. Current population pressures and daily fluctuations in prisoner numbers mean that none of the spaces empty on that date can be regarded as surplus to our needs.

Local prisons and remand centres, which receive prisoners directly from courts on a daily basis, must have sufficient capacity to accept unpredictable numbers of prisoners. Vacancies in training prisons, where there is normally no overcrowding, are filled in groups so that efficient use is made of prisoner escorting arrangements. This can lead to some under occupation of training prison places.

When new prisons are opened, the capacity available is filled gradually to assist in maintaining stability. This is currently the position at Doncaster.

Establishments with population below CNA in use of 8 July 1994

Acklington
Albany
Aldington
Ashwell
Askham Grange
Aylesbury
Bedford
Belmarsh
Blakenhurst
Blundeston
Brinsford
Brockhill
Bullingdon
Bullwood Hall
Castington
Channings Wood
Coldingley
Dartmoor
Deerbolt
Doncaster
Dover
Downview
Drake Hall
Elmley
Erlestoke
Everthorpe
Featherstone
Feltham
Ford
Foston Hall
Frankland
Full Sutton
Garth
Gartree
Grendon
Guys Marsh
Hatfield
Haverigg
Highdown
Highpoint
Hollesley Bay
Holloway
Holme House
Huntercombe
Kingston
Kirklevington
Lancaster
Latchmere House
Leyhill
Lindholme
Littlehey
Long Lartin
Kirkham
Maidstone
Moorland
Morton Hill
Nottingham
Onley
Oxford
Parkhurst
Portland
Prescoed
Ranby
Reading
Risley
Rochester
Rudgate
Send
Spring Hill
Standford Hill
Stoke Heath
Sudbury
Swalesside
The Mount
The Verne
The Wolds
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Usk
Wakefield
Wayland
Wellingborough
Werrington
Wetherby
Whatton
Whitemoor
Woodhill
Wymott

Information Technology

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the result of the market test of IT services in his Department.

Mr. Howard: The market test of ED5, the Home Office administrative IT services division, has now been concluded and it has been decided to award a contract to Sema Group plc, whose bid was judged to represent the best value for money.

Victim Support Schemes

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the value-for-money survey by Coopers and Lybrand into the National Association of Victim Support Schemes commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* I have done so today. The report, which was commissioned and paid for by the Home Office, was a value for money audit of the national office of victim support. It makes a number of recommendations about the relationship between victim support and the Home Office which require, and are receiving, careful consideration. They have still to be fully discussed with victim support. Our intention is to disseminate the report more widely when that consideration is further advanced.

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report,* column *48,* which alterations at Blakenhurst prison were paid for by United Kingdom Detention Services; how much was paid for each of these alterations; which alterations were paid for by the Prison Service; and how much was paid for each of these alterations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 19 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about who has paid for the alterations to Blakenhurst Prison.

United Kingdom Detention Services Limited have paid for a number of major alterations to the prison including providing prisoner shops (canteens) in four houseblocks; modifying the holding cells in reception; altering one spur of a houseblock to create a Vulnerable Prisoner Unit; and changing the majority of spy holes to polycarbonate. I understand that the cost of these and other minor alterations was greater than £200,000, including VAT, and has been met solely by UKDS.

In their bid to run Blakenhurst, UKDS included proposals for a number of security enhancements. These included additional electronic locking and closed circuit television cameras. The cost of these was included in the price of the contract and paid for from the start-up costs which UKDS received in five monthly instalments before the prison opened.

The Prison Service have paid for essential alterations to the water supply system; the kitchen ceiling; sports hall modifications and a small number of other projects. The total cost of these works was £91,500 including VAT, of which £80,000 was for the water supply system. The Prison Service would have incurred these costs regardless of who managed the prison.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

STEP Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what commitment in terms of expenditure and person years of staff time has been given to the STEP—standard for exchange of product data—programme in

1993-94; what similar commitment has been outlined for 1994-95; and what report has been made to Parliament on its progress.

Mr. McLoughlin: The main United Kingdom commitment to the internatioinal development of STEP —ISO 10303; standard for the exchange of product model data—is undertaken through BSI/DISC. Within the DTI innovation budget, spend on STEP projects in 1993-94 was £336,444. For the current year, 1994-95, the forecast is £371,253, of which £88,181 has been committed. STEP is not specifically identified within the DTI manpower returns and no specific report has been made to Parliament.

Civil Aircraft

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the future market for civil aircraft; and in what way he discusses those market prospects with British industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of Trade and Industry currently estimates that around 12,000 commercial jet airliners and around 4,000 commercial turbo-prop airliners will be required over the next 20 years. The Department estimates that those sales will be worth in excess of £450 billion at current prices.

This market opportunity is frequently discussed with the United Kingdom firms in this sector, both to promote the interests of the United Kingdom aerospace industry and in response to the Department's financial sponsorship commitments. The Department also uses a market panel, with members drawn from manufacturing and transport industries to advise on future civil aircraft issues.

Business Links

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the business links established, their location, the partners involved in each business link, the current list of applications, the location of the current applications and the partners involved in the current application.

Mr. McLoughlin: Plans have been approved for 33 areas in England, providing for 110 business link outlets. Some 34 business link outlets are currently operational. I expect around 60 business links to be open by the end of the year. The aim is that by the end of 1995, every firm in England will have access to a business link. I have today placed a list of established business links, current applications and partners involved, in the Library of the House.

Isle of Man (Fraud)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to protect British investors from fraud operated from the Isle of Man.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no new measures in mind. Any fraud perpetrated in the Isle of Man is subject to the laws and courts of the island. There is close co-operation between United Kingdom and Manx enforcement agencies in the detection and prosecution of fraud offences.

Nuclear Electric (Staff)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many full-time, part-time and contract staff have been employed by Nuclear Electric for each year since 1989;

(2) how many former full-time employees of Nuclear Electric have subsequently been re-hired by the company on a contract basis in each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how much has been spent by Nuclear Electric on contract staff in each year since 1989.

Mr. Eggar: These are commercial matters for Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his assessment of the effect of recently announced job losses of 2,000 personnel by Nuclear Electric on *(a)* safety, *(b)* design work and *(c)* export potential.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the company has yet to decide where the reductions will be made. The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate will not allow the company to operate its nuclear facilities unless it is satisfied that they can be operated safely. Resources on design work and exports are commercial matters for the company.

Telecommunications (Deregulation)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding the regulations preventing BT and Mercury transmitting entertainment; what plans he has for deregulating this area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 June 1994, *Official Report,* column 227.

Ferranti/ISC

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate *(a)* the volume of United Kingdom trade lost and *(b)* the number of jobs lost as a result of the collapse of Ferranti/ISC; and if he will list in full the communications between his Department and departments of the United States Government in Ferranti/ISC; and what action by way of reports, surveys or other specific measures his Department has taken as a result of the collapse of Ferranti/ISC.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has made no estimate of the effect on trade or jobs of the ISC fraud, discovered in 1989. In January 1990, reference was made to the fraud at a meeting with the United States Treasury, and a request to DTI for United States officials to visit the United Kingdom was dealt with by the Serious Fraud Office. Since Ferranti International plc went into receivership last December, about 850 jobs have been lost, but over 1,050 have already been saved through disposals and the Department continues to keep in close touch with the receivers, who are seeking to dispose of the remaining businesses.

Companies House

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the Companies House agency's fees for inspection and filing annual returns and targets for 1994-95.

Mr. Heseltine: In October 1992, as part of our policy of reviewing the status and performance of next steps agencies, my Department appointed consultants to look at the options for the future of Companies House. The object of the review was to consider how best to ensure that Companies House continued to build on its record of improvements in efficiency, value for money and standards of service in the future.

The consultants' report described a number of ways in which closer private sector involvement in the activities of Companies House could help those aims. I have now asked them to explore one of them by consulting further with the market on how best to contract out most of the services of Companies House in order to gain the commercial discipline and investment in technology skills of the private sector. Under this option, responsibility for the registrar's functions and ownership of the register would remain with my Department. On the distribution of information, the consultants will consider whether, and if so how far, the new Companies House should withdraw from those activities where it might compete with other parts of the business information industry. The consultants will seek the views of Companies House, its customers and users, and the business information industry.

This work is due to be completed in the early autumn. I will make a further announcement about the future of Companies House in the light of the consultants' findings. In the meantime, however, I am pleased to announce that the fees for incorporating a company and for submitting annual returns to Companies House will be reduced to approximately half their current level. I propose that these reductions should be implemented in respect of those documents due after 1 October 1994. A statutory instrument will be laid before Parliament shortly.

I have set Companies House executive agency the following targets for 1994-95:

- to make all statutory documents available for public inspection within a maximum of five working days of receipt in Companies House;
- to ensure that 31 March 1995 a minimum of 90 per cent. of fiche provided to customers are error free;
- to reduce real unit costs by an average of 5 per cent. in 1994-95;
- to achieve a 6 per cent. average annual rate of return based on operating surplus expressed as a percentage of average net assets employed at current values;
- to answer 90 per cent. of incoming telephone calls within six rings (20 seconds);
- to achieve an overall compliance rate for Companies filing annual returns and accounts of 90 per cent. by 30 June 1994;

and for the remainder of the year

- to achieve, on average during the period July 1994 to March 1995, a monthly compliance rate for accounts submitted of 94 per cent. and for annual returns submitted of 91 per cent.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of the agency to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

Metrication

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation on phasing out the use of imperial units following the adoption of the 1989 amendment to the units of measurement directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My noble Friend Lord Strathclyde has today laid before Parliament the following instruments which implement the units of measurement directive in relation to the authorisation of units of measurement, and their use for weights and measures and price marking purposes:

- the Units of Measurement Regulations 1994;
- the Weights and Measures Act 1985 (Metrication) (Amendment) Order 1994;
- the Weights and Measures (Metrication) (Miscellaneous Goods) (Amendment) Order 1994;
- the Weights and Measures (Packaged Goods and Quantity Marking and Abbreviations of Units) (Amendment) Regulations 1994;
- the Weights and Measures (Metrication Amendments) Regulations 1994; and
- the Price Marking (Amendment) Order 1994.

The first three SIs have been laid in draft for approval by resolution of each House of Parliament. The last three have been made before laying and are subject to the negative resolution procedure. The legislation provides that the doorstep pint of milk and the pint of draught beer or cider in the pub will be allowed without time limit as well as the mile for road traffic signs, speedometers and odometers.

For many purposes, the United Kingdom has already switched to the metric system. From 1 October 1995, almost all goods sold by quantity, including food pre-packed in variable weights such as cheese and meats that are not already traded in metric will have to be so traded. The principal exception is in respect of goods sold loose from bulk by the pound and ounce—primarily foods, such as meat, poultry, cheese, fish and fresh fruit and vegetables—which will not have to switch to metric until 1 January 2000.

Retailers who price food sold loose from bulk or pre-packed in variable weights in metric during the transitional periods will be required to display a price conversion chart or to dual price items. The British retail consortium has agreed to adopt a code under which retailers will supplement this with further charts at any place where consumers select such food which is priced in metric. My Department is discussing with the trade other publicity measures.

Insurance Intermediaries

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the European Commission's recommendation on insurance intermediaries.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Commission issued its recommendation in December 1991 as part of the single market programme. My Department issued a consultative document on it in November 1992. Most comments focused on the protection afforded to UK consumers by the current UK regulatory arrangements. Little evidence emerged to suggest that there are significant barriers to trade affecting insurance intermediaries which need to be addressed through Community legislation.

As regards the sale of most life insurance policies, the regulatory regime established under the Financial Services Act 1986 already meets the detailed provisions of the Commission's recommendations. As regards the activities of registered brokers, the rules of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council are also in accord with the recommendations. However, a number of respondents criticised the non-statutory arrangements under the Association of British Insurers' general business code of practice, "the ABI Code", which covers the sale of general insurance by company representatives, tied agents and independent intermediaries who are not registered brokers.

The ABI Code was last revised in 1989 and its operation has since been monitored by an independent code monitoring committee chaired by Sir Kenneth Clucas. In January 1993, the committee recommended several changes to the code. The committee concluded, however, that overall the code provided reasonable protection to consumers and should continue rather than being replaced by statutory regulation. The ABI has expressed its willingness to act on the committee's recommendations. In those circumstances, I see no need to introduce more statutory regulation in this area. The most appropriate and cost-effective response to the Commission's recommendation is to build on the arrangements we already have.

The ABI is today announcing a number of improvements in the operation of the code. These will clarify the code's provisions and will lead to more detailed procedural guidance for practitioners. The association has also agreed that changes in the IBRC's code of conduct and accounts rules will be reflected in the code. Further changes may be made to reflect aspects of the Commission's recommendation. There will be a publicity campaign to heighten awareness of the code and its application will continue to be monitored by the code monitoring committee, now under the chairmanship of Sir Terry Heiser. My Department will encourage non-members of the ABI to abide by the code's principles.

The completion of the single market in insurance will undoubtedly increase competition in the sale of insurance products throughout the Community. I shall maintain a close interest in developments, and shall be sensitive to any emerging evidence of significant barriers to trade in this area.

Export Market Information Centre

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the results of his review of the Department's export market information centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Twelve organisations expressed initial interest in running an export market information centre —EMIC—and I invited six to make formal bids. I have selected the offer from the management of the existing centre. The other bids, from the British library and the joint venture headed by the Institute of Export, included, however, a number of attractive ideas capable of enhancing the services which EMIC could offer its customers. I am pleased to say that both organisations have agreed to offer services in a form of partnership with EMIC. Precise arrangements are being negotiated. The new combined services should commence in the autumn and allow EMIC to be fully integrated with market branches, export promoters and business links.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement about the arrangements for publishing compliance cost assessments to show the cost impact on business of complying with legislative proposals.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Further to the answer I gave in my written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 19 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *202*, the Government have revised the arrangements for publishing compliance cost assessments for domestic legislative proposals which impact on business as follows:

in the case of Government Bills, a summary of the CCA will form part of the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill and will include a reference to where the full CCA can be obtained.

in the case of Statutory Instruments, the Explanatory Note will contain a note that a CCA is available and where it can be obtained.

in the case of Private Members' Bills, where the Government considers it is appropriate to prepare a CCA every effort will be made to produce it by the date first set down for second reading of the Bill.

in the case of Private Bills the Government are still considering how the system can be extended to such Bills.

In all cases, a copy of the CCA will be available in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies will also be made available to the Vote Office and/or the Printed Paper Office for selected pieces of draft legislation, and to Committees considering Bills or statutory instruments where the Government judge it to be appropriate. The Government will also publish a command paper at six-monthly intervals to place on record those CCAs published over the preceding six month period and where they can be obtained.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he proposes to competition law in the context of the impending reorganisation of milk marketing arrangements.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have today laid before the House the Monopolies References (Alterations of Exclusions) Order 1994. The order, which amends part II of schedule 7 of the Fair Trading Act 1973, will enable the Director General of Fair Trading to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the wholesale supply of milk in areas which are no longer covered by a statutory marketing scheme. This fulfills the commitment which the Government gave in 1993 during the passage of the Agriculture Act that, once the milk marketing schemes were revoked, milk trading should be fully subject to competition law in the same way as any other sector.

The order comes into force on 31 October 1994. As each statutory scheme is revoked, the market it covered will become subject to scrutiny by the Director General of Fair Trading, who will be able to make a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if he considers it appropriate.

Power Losses

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many losses of power at the Rheola relay station have occurred in each year since 1990; and what is the average across Britain.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The information is not available in the form requested. The Independent Television Commission has determined national standards of reliability, measured in terms of service availability to viewer. For relay stations such as Rheola the minimum standard is 99 per cent. In 1993, there were seven periods in which electrical power was lost at the Rheola transmitter, of which five were for maintenances, resulting in transmissions being available to viewers for 99·5 per cent. of the time.

Colliery Closures

Mr. David Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the measures taken so far to help those areas in England affected by recent colliery closures.

Mr. Eggar: The Government provided a total of £200 million in regeneration funds to help the areas affected by pit closures. This funding was designed both to provide direct help and to encourage other public and private-sector investment in those areas: attracting new jobs, filling the funding gap for strategic projects and providing for other key activities such as retraining.

Training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service play a key part in regenerating coalfield areas. That is why the £180 million package announced in October 1992 including £75 million for training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service for special training and employment measures, £75 million for a three-year English Partnership's programme of factory and site provision, and a number of other measures. The additional £20 million announced in March 1993 was to allow major strategic projects to go ahead.

Since we announced the initial package, eight pits which were scheduled to close have been leased or licensed to the private sector. That means that the total number of collieries now operating is substantially more than would have been the case had the original closure proposals made in October 1992 gone ahead. That has further improved the prospects of the coalfield areas.

Lord Walker was asked to co-ordinate this major effort to assist the coalfield areas and advise on the strategic projects. I am grateful for the effectiveness and enthusiasm with which he has carried out this task. He has established a network of contacts in each region. He has monitored and co-ordinated the various agencies responsible for delivering the original £180 million package and has made the necessary judgments on the allocation of the approximately £20 million made available for strategic projects. His role as chairman of English Partnerships gives him a continuing close interest in the regeneration of the coalfield areas.

The main regeneration initiatives in each region are in the list. These will provide significant support in themselves, but they will also help attract further investment in the coal areas.

North East Assisted Areas
Restoration of Development Area status to Morpeth and Ashington TTWA.

English Partnerships
£16 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites, in particular at Seaham Grange and Ashington. £1·75 million as a strategic project for improvements for site access in the Wansbeck area.

TECs and Employment Service
£12·7 million additional budget allocation for coalfield areas.

Coalfield Areas Fund
£250k for regeneration projects in Easington.

Enterprise Zone
An Enterprise Zone comprising six sites to be designated in East Durham.

Tyne and Wear Development Corporation
£2 million for inward investment promotion and £2 million for development of strategic sites in Tyneside.

Regional Selective Assistance
Five large projects creating over 2,000 jobs (EMC Magnetics, Cramlington; Onwa Electronics and Interconnection Systems, South Tyneside; Lucas SEI and Goldstar, Wearside).

Regeneration Partnerships
The Government Office for the North East plays an active role in coalfield regeneration taskforces in East Durham and Northumberland and also in the Wansbeck Initiative.

Yorkshire and Humberside English Partnerships
£24 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites. Plans announced:

Barnsley—192,000 square feet of additional factory/workshop space and 7·5 acres of land for further industrial schemes. Extra £6 million funding for Barnsley.

Doncaster—110,000 square feet of factories and workshops. Extra £8 million funding for Doncaster.

Rotherham—30,000 square feet of factories. Extra £6 million for Rotherham.

Wakefield—Proposals to bring forward an industrial and commercial development of £4 million.

Further and Higher Education
Up to £2 million to support further and higher education provision in the Dearne Valley subject to the completion of negotiations.

Road improvements
Up to £3·75 million in Doncaster and Barnsley: contribution to Denaby on main diversion, access from the M18 into Doncaster Carr and design and preparation of access to Grimethorpe.

TECs and Employment Service
£25·3 million additional budget allocation for coalfield areas.

Coalfield Areas Fund
£1·2 million for regeneration projects.

Enterprise Zone
A 360 acre Enterprise Zone to be designated in the Dearne Valley.

Department of Transport Main Programme
Work is underway on the Dearne Towns Link Road and the Wath Manvers Spine Road.

Assisted Area Status
Barnsley and Doncaster upgraded from Intermediate to Development Area status.

Wakefield & Dewsbury and Castleford & Pontefract upgraded from Non-Assisted to Intermediate Area status.

Regional Enterprise Grants
Regional Enterprise Grants extended to specific wards around Sharlston.

Regional Selective Assistance
Tunstall project in Barnsley: 600 jobs eventually, £11 million project.

North West EC Objective 1 status
Parkside Colliery has been identified as a key area for regeneration through targeted investment under the Objective 1 programme for Merseyside.

English Partnerships
£4 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.
Plans announced:
88,000 sq ft of new factory space and the acquisition of 10 acres of land.

TECs and Employment Service
£2·2 million additional budget allocation for coalfield areas.

Coalfield Areas Fund
£270,000 for regeneration projects.

East Midlands English Partnerships
£21 million provision of industrial and commercial sites.
Plans announced:
173 acres acquired for development.
the provision of 176,000 sq ft of new factory space.

TEC and Employment Service
£23·7 million additional budget allocation for coalfield areas.

Robin Hood Line
£6·5 million to help extend the Robin Hood Line from Newstead to Mansfield (Stage 2).

Coalfield Areas fund
£2·4 million regeneration projects in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

East Midlands Development Organisation
£650,000 two years funding for the new East Midlands Development Organisation, to promote inward investment.

Annesley
Flagship Business Park.

Enterprise Zone
Enterprise Zones to be designated in the districts of Mansfield, Ashfield, North East Derbyshire and Bassetlaw.

Coal Authority
To be based in Mansfield.

Assisted Area status
Mansfield TTWA upgraded from Non-Assisted Area to Development Area Status.
Alfreton and Ashfield; Chesterfield; Retford; and Worksop upgraded from Non-Assisted Area to Intermediate Area status.

Regional Enterprise Grants
Regional Enterprise Grants extended to specific wards in coalfield areas.

Regional Selective Assistance
Johnson Control: 450 jobs, £1·7 million grant.

West Midlands English Partnerships
£7 million for the provision of industrial and commercial sites.
Plans announced:
70,000 sq ft of new factory space at High Carr and 27,500 sq ft of factory space at Fenton, both in North Staffordshire.
Negotiations continue regarding other sites in both North and South Staffordshire.

TECs and Employment Service
£8·4 million additional budget allocation for the coalfield areas of North Staffordshire, South Staffordshire and North Warwickshire.

Coalfield Areas Fund
£820,000 for regeneration projects in Stoke.

Regional Enterprise Grants
Regional Enterprise Grants extended to specific wards in the Trentham and Littleton areas.

Objective 2 status
Stoke will get Objective 2 status for the first time. Much of the southern Staffordshire coalfield will also be included.

Strategic Projects
Support for projects in Stoke:—Minton Hollins distribution centre;
Fenton Manor Business Park—infrastructure works.
Trentham: site investigations at Trentham North and provision for access at Trentham South.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Business Parks

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at which locations in the city of Belfast there are business parks; approximately how many persons are employed at each of these business parks; at which locations new business parks are proposed; and if he will make a statement on future public funding for business parks.

Mr. Tim Smith: The development of business parks is a private sector initiative and the Department of Economic Development does not have access to the information requested.

As far as public funding for business parks is concerned, limited assistance may be available to private developers from the Local Enterprise Development Unit under its property development scheme.

War Veterans

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will meet representatives of Ards borough council and war veterans from that district to discuss problems in respect of their desire to link with Belgian veterans and communities celebrating the 50th anniversary of liberation this autumn;

(2) if he will make an announcement on the visit to Belgium of war veterans living in the Ards borough council area before the parliamentary recess.

Mr. Tim Smith: My right hon. and learned Friend will be writing shortly to the hon. Member confirming that the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland is prepared to consider favourably the granting of approval to Ards borough council to fund a visit to Belgium by ex-service men from its district as part of the Belgian liberation celebrations. In these circumstances, a meeting would not seem to be necessary.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has held with the Data Protection Registrar, prior to the use of the national insurance number by the private sector, in relation to the Northern Ireland personal injuries claims register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: There have been no discussions at ministerial level on this subject. There has been correspondence at official level with the Association of British Insurers which, in turn, has been in contact with the Data Protection Registrar about the use of national insurance numbers for the purposes of the association's Northern Ireland personal injuries register and this is continuing.

Enterprise Centres

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at which locations in Belfast there are enterprise centres; how many persons are employed at these enterprise centres; at which locations in Belfast new enterprise centres are planned; and if he will make a statement on proposed public funding of enterprise centres.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information is as follows:

	Total employed
Enterprise centres	
Action Resource Centre 103-107 York Street	12
Argyle Business Centre 39 Howard Street	23
Brookfield Business Centre 333 Crumlin Road	260
Farset Enterprise Park 638 Springfield Road	47
Glenwood Enterprises Springbank Industrial Estate	90
Townsend Enterprise Park 28 Townsend Park	150
Work West 301 Glen Road	50
Westlink Enterprise 30-50 Distillery Road	66
North City Business 2, Duncairn Gardens	No tenants yet
New Enterprise Centres	
East Belfast Enterprise Park 16 Castlereagh Street	
Ormagh Enterprises (location to be decided)	

In terms of public funding, the Local Enterprise Development Unit's local enterprise programme setting up the new enterprise centres is almost complete. Within the LEP strategy, LEDU is working with all the centres to build upon their achievements to date.

Public Bodies

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the salaries for each of the last 10 years for the chairman and chief executive of *(a)* the Equal Opportunities Commission, *(b)* the Fair Employment Commission, *(c)* the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, *(d)* the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland, *(e)* the Labour Relations Agency, *(f)* the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, *(g)* the Industrial Development Board, *(h)* the Local Enterprise Development Unit, *(i)* the Social Security Agency and *(j)* the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Sir John Wheeler: The salary of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency, which was established on 1 July 1991, is based on the Northern Ireland civil service grade 3 salary scale. The total gross remuneration paid to the chief executive from that date has been as follows:

Year	*£*
1991-92	49,866
1992-93	53,700
1993-94	55,878

The information requested for the other bodies can be obtained from the Cabinet Office annual publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are held in the Library.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Tim Smith: Assistance towards small firms in Northern Ireland is delivered for the Department of Economic Development by its agency the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

LEDU's strategy forms an integral part of the Government's approach to encourage competitiveness and growth among small business. LEDU had a successful year in 1993-94 and I am encouraged that it has continued to build upon its record-breaking performance in 1992-93. The turnover among LEDU client companies increased by 9·5 per cent. in 1993-94 and employment increased by 4·7 per cent.

Key results for the past two years and similar key targets for next year are as follows:

Performance indicators	*1992-93 results*	*1993-94 results*	*1994-95 targets*
Business start training (nos)	3,716	3,979	3,000
Small business accommodation	22,000 sq m	10,501 sq m	8,200 sq m
Growth implementing contracts signed	147	141	152
Contracts to companies engaged in projects to overcome barriers to growth	447	795	760

Nursery Schools

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* nursery schools and classes and *(b)* children under five in reception classes, in each year since 1989-90, and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Expenditure on nursery and reception classes in primary schools is subsumed in the total for primary schools, and could only be identified at disproportionate cost.

Expenditure on nursery schools is as follows:

	£m	*percentage of GDP*
1989-90	5·1	·001
1990-91	5·6	·001
1991-92	6·9	·001
1992-93	7·3	n/a
1993-94	[1]7·8	n/a

[1] estimated.

Fair Employment Tribunals

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases have been heard since 1989 by fair employment tribunals consisting of *(a)* three Catholic members, *(b)* two Catholic members and one Protestant member, *(c)* one Catholic member and two Protestant members and *(d)* three Protestant members.

Mr. Tim Smith: A breakdown of the perceived religion of panel members for the fair employment tribunals which heard and determined cases since 1989 is shown in the table:

FET Panel Constitution	*Number of cases*
Three Catholic members	1
Two Catholic and one Protestant member	52
One Catholic and two Protestant members	61
Three Protestant members	—
Total	114

Public Appointments

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public appointments held by Mr. David Cook and Mrs. Fionnula Cook since 1980.

Sir John Wheeler: The following public appointments have been held by Mr. David Cook and Mrs. Fionnuala Cook since 1980.

Appointment	*Duration*
Mr. David Cook	
As a City Council Trustee—Ulster Museum	1 January 1973 to 1 June 1985
Chairman—Health and Social Services Trust (Craigavon and Banbridge Unit of Management)	23 November 1993 to 23 November 1997
Chairman—Police Authority for Northern Ireland	29 June 1994 to 28 June 1997
Mrs. Fionnuala Cook	
Member—Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board	5 November 1989 to 4 November 1995
Chairman—Southern Health and Social Services Council	1 April 1991 to 31 May 1995

Driving Offences

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many motorists were *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of (i) failure to accord precedence at pedestrian crossings, endorseable offences, (ii) failure to comply with traffic signs, (iii) speed limit offences, (iv) driving etc. after consuming alcohol or taking drugs and (v) reckless driving in Northern Ireland in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Sir John Wheeler: Information on the number of persons with these offences is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Readily available information is as follows:

Persons Convicted of Motoring Offences in Northern Ireland 1991-1993

Offence	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Failure to accord precedence at pedestrian crossings (Zebra and Pelican)	5	0	4
Failure to comply with traffic signs (Art. 158 Road Traffic Order)	370	288	280
Speed Limit Offences	2,683	2,535	2,320
All Drunk-in-Charge Offences	2,675	3,203	3,167
Reckless Driving Causing Death	19	10	19
Reckless Driving Causing Grievous Bodily Harm	11	8	11
Reckless Driving	449	392	327

Rents

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he holds on the levels of rent being charged in *(a)* the public sector, *(b)* the private sector and *(c)* by housing associations.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland holds information on the levels of rent being charged as follows:

(a) public sector: average weekly rent of £29·63 from 1 April 1994[1]

(b) private sector: no information is held

(c) housing associations: average rents at 31 March 1994 are shown on the table below.

Dwelling type	*Controlled[2] (£)*	*De-controlled[3] (£)*
Bedsit	18·95	28·46
1 Bedroom	22·51	25·94
2 Bedrooms	26·88	27·73
3 Bedrooms	31·63	34·25
4 Bedrooms	33·40	39·12

[1] Information is not held on rent levels by dwelling type.

[2] Controlled rents are for tenancies granted prior to 16 September 1992 and Departmental approval is required for rent increases.

[3] De-controlled rents are for tenancies grated from 16 September 1992 and rent increases are not subject to Departmental approval.

Nurse Education and Training

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to provide for the retraining and redeployment of nurse teachers who are displaced as a result of the proposed reduction in the number of nursing students.

Mr. Ancram: The health and personal social services staff redeployment unit was established in June 1993 with the remit of setting up a clearing house system to allow staff who are declared redundant by their current employers to have first opportunity of applying for any posts for which recruitment is taking place elsewhere in the Northern Ireland health and personal social services. The fully computerised system agreed with participating employers covers all health and social services boards, units of management, health and social services trusts, together with the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency and the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Following the introduction of the clearing house system, the staff redeployment unit has been encouraged to extend its activities to include the provision of information to employees faced with redundancy; the investigation of employment opportunities for redundant staff outside the statutory health and personal social services in Northern Ireland; and measures to enhance the employment opportunities for newly qualified nurses who are unable to obtain employment on completion of training.

To date, the Northern Ireland national board has not found it necessary to make any of its nurse tutors redundant and has achieved reductions in staffing levels by means of voluntary early retirement.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown of the spending on nurse education and training for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 identifying the spending allocated to *(a)* pre-registration education, *(b)* post-registration education and *(c)* nurse teacher training and support.

Mr. Ancram: It is not possible to identify separately spending on pre- and post-registration education. Otherwise information is as follows:

	Nurse education and training £ million	*Nurse teacher training £000's*
1990-91	10·7	180
1991-92	15·4	253
1992-93	27·4	246
1993-94	27·3	119

Notes:

1. The figures for Nurse Education and Training include National Board revenue, the cost of the community nurse training programme, the training element of the cost of salaries and bursaries for the years 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the implementation costs of Project 2000.
2. It is not possible to identify the training element in salaries and bursaries for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total cost of the changes in nurse education since 1989 which result from the introduction of Project 2000.

Mr. Ancram: In the period 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1994, a total of £7·96 million has been allocated to the four health and social services boards and the Northern Ireland National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, to meet the additional costs of implementing Project 2000.

Road Accidents (Pedestrians)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults were (i) killed and (ii) seriously or (iii) slightly injured on or near pedestrian crossings in Northern Ireland in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Accidents and casualties on or near pedestrian crossings

Year	Accidents	Killed	Serious injuries	Slight injuries
(i) Children (under 15 years)				
1991	26	0	8	22
1992	29	0	7	25
1993	29	0	4	29
(ii) Adults (15 years and over)				
1991	70	1	15	94
1992	59	1	17	84
1993	67	2	10	97

Rate Collection Agency

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for the Rate Collection Agency in 1994-95.

Mr. Tim Smith: For 1994-95 the following performance targets have been set for the agency:

1. To reduce rating debt to 1·76 per cent. of the Gross Collectable Rate excluding late assessments by 31 March 1995.
2. To achieve a reduction of 2 per cent. in the real value of the direct unit costs of collecting rates per hereditament.
3. To generate refunds to 97 per cent. of ratepayers so entitled within 14 days of credits being identified.
4. To process by 31 March 1995 80 per cent. of applications for the incoming year received from existing Housing Benefit recipients before 15 March 1995.
5. To achieve a reduction of 2 per cent. in the real value of the direct unit costs of processing Housing Benefit cases.
6. To assess 97 per cent. of Housing Benefit claims free of error.

Public Record Office

Sir James Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for the future organisation of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Government have decided that the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, which is responsible for the identification and preservation of Northern Ireland's archival heritage and for ensuring public access to that heritage, should become a next steps agency from 1 April 1995. This will give the Public Record Office the freedom to operate as an independent organisation within a framework of appropriate efficiency targets and performance measures. Accountability for the organisation will remain with the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Ordnance Survey

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland in 1994-95.

Mr. Tim Smith: For 1994-95 the following performance targets have been set for OSNI:

1. to survey 25,000 house units in the continuous revision programme;
2. to complete 850 data capture units representing 1,630 basic scale map sheets converted to digital format;
3. to update the digital topographical database with 90 per cent. of the surveyed change within 7 days of receipt of the field data;
4. to dispatch, within 7 working days, 90 per cent. of orders for folded and basic scale maps;
5. to reduce unit costs so that the weighted mean percentage reduction of selected representative activities is 3 per cent.; and
6. to recover from the supply of goods and services, 24 per cent. of the total costs incurred by OSNI.

Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what targets have been set for the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency in 1994-95.

Mr. Tim Smith: For 1994-95 the following performance targets have been set for the agency:

Vehicle Test appointments—5 weeks average waiting time.
Driving Test appointments—10 weeks average waiting time.
Productivity—(Vehicle Testing)—16·15 units per man per day.
Productivity—(Driver Testing)—7·7 units per man per day.
Error Rate: Faulty inspections not to exceed 0·3 per cent. of tests conducted.
Level of complaints about booking arrangements—less than 2 per cent. of applications received.
Level of complaints about the conduct of tests—less than 2 per cent. of applications received.
Level of customer satisfaction with booking arrangements —greater than 80 per cent.
Level of customer satisfaction with test procedures—greater than 90 per cent.
Number of compensation payments for cancelled tests—not more than 1 per cent. of applications received.
Composite unit cost—£16·32.

Consultants

Mr. Mi[illegible]n: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ire[illegible] which management consultants have been employed by his Department to assist in the assessment of applications for trust status; how much each was paid; and how many assessments they undertook, in each wave.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* IHSM Consultants has been engaged by the Department of Health and Social Services to assist in the assessment of the management capacity of trust applicants in each of the three waves to date. The payments, which include fees and expenses in each case, and number of assessments in each wave are set out below:

1st Wave £9,519·45 in respect of one assessment
2nd Wave £16,559·52 in respect of ten assessments
3rd Wave £10,413·30 in respect of two assessments

Raw Wool Purchases

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has about persons or firms from the Irish Republic purchasing raw wool from farmers in Northern Ireland and about the price offered for such wool by purchasers in Northern Ireland; and what is his estimate of the consequences of wool being moved across the land frontier to the Republic.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The British wool marketing scheme permits the sale of wool in its raw state—that is, unsorted and ungraded—to buyers outside the United Kingdom. Little information is available about persons or firms from the Republic of Ireland who purchase raw wool from farmers in Northern Ireland or about the prices offered for such wool by such purchasers. The quantity of wool exported to the Republic of Ireland in 1993, however, was insubstantial and the prices paid are likely to have been lower than those paid for

wool sold to the British wool marketing board. The effect on the British wool market of exports of such small quantities is not expected to be significant.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of the appointment of Andersen Consulting as consultants to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. David Hanson:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the cost of Andersen Consulting to the Child Support Agency.

I am afraid that I am unable to provide you with information about Andersen Consulting in particular as this information is confidential due to its commercial nature. I can tell you however, that the Agency spent a total of £2·3 million on consultants in 1993-94.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the Child Support Agency has spent on consultants in 1993; and what is the estimated expenditure on the contract with Andersen Consulting.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. John Speller:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on the Agency's expenditure on consultants.

In 1993-94 the Agency spent £2·3 million on consultants.

I am afraid that I am unable to provide the other information you request as it is confidential due to its commercial nature.

Benefits

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the resident population in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales are in receipt of benefits other than retirement pensions; and what were the numbers in (i) 1964, (ii) 1971, (iii) 1981 and (iv) 1991.

Mr. Burt: Information on a territorial basis is not available for all benefits. Such information as is available is in the tables. The numbers provided are based on awards of benefit and contain a degree of overlap as people may be in receipt of more than one benefit.

It is not possible to determine the percentage of the resident population represented by the figures as information on the number of individuals covered by each award is not readily available.

Benefit recipients in England

Benefit	*Number of recipients (000's unless stated*)*				
	1964	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*	*1993/ latest*
Attendance Allowance	n/a	n/a	293	771	760
Child Benefit	3,199	3,672	6,058	5,813	5,919
Rent Rebate	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,337	2,451
Rent Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	977	1,338
Community Charge Benefit	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,475	n/a
Council Tax Benefit (CTB)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,523
Disability Living Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,033
Disability Working Allowance*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,990
FIS/Family Credit	n/a	n/a	85	278	429
Guardians Allowance*	n/a	n/a	2,695	1,501	1,630
Supplementary Benefit/Income Support	n/a	2,398	3,131	3,743	4,795
Industrial Disablement Benefit	n/a	158	150	152	169
Invalidity Benefit	n/a	n/a	468	971	1,072
Maternity Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	48	40
Mobility Allowance	n/a	n/a	174	545	n/a
One Parent Benefit	n/a	n/a	399	692	757
Sickness Benefit	n/a	n/a	282	83	109
Severe Disablement Allowance	n/a	n/a	107	237	245
Unemployment Benefit	122	346	951	543	501
Widows Benefit	n/a	n/a	335	269	261

Benefit recipients in Scotland

Benefit	*Number of recipients (000's unless stated*)*				
	1964	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*	*1993/ latest*
Attendance Allowance	n/a	n/a	30	84	74
Child Benefit	405	439	679	615	621
Rent Rebate	n/a	n/a	n/a	466	458
Rent Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	74	91
Community Charge Benefit	n/a	n/a	n/a	646	n/a
Council Tax Benefit (CTB)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	573
Disability Living Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	146
Disability Working Allowance*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	341
FIS/Family Credit	n/a	n/a	14	41	60
Guardians Allowance*	n/a	n/a	487	255	247

Benefit	Number of recipients (000's unless stated*)				
	1964	1971	1981	1991	1993/ latest
Supplementary Benefit/Income Support	n/a	322	371	487	543
Industrial Disablement Benefit	n/a	18	16	17	19
Invalidity Benefit	n/a	n/a	88	181	200
Maternity Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	2
Mobility Allowance	n/a	n/a	21	82	n/a
One Parent Benefit	n/a	n/a	48	87	97
Sickness Benefit	n/a	n/a	44	15	17
Severe Disablement Allowance	n/a	n/a	18	34	35
Unemployment Benefit	36	72	141	55	57
Widows Benefit	n/a	n/a	48	39	38

Benefit recipients in Wales

Benefit	Number of recipients (000's unless stated*)				
	1964	1971	1981	1991	1993/ latest
Attendance Allowance	n/a	n/a	28	63	56
Child Benefit	190	212	362	355	357
Rent Rebate	n/a	n/a	n/a	152	154
Rent Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	56	74
Community Charge Benefit	n/a	n/a	n/a	341	n/a
Council Tax Benefit (CTB)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	273
Disability Living Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	102
Disability Working Allowance*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	245
FIS/Family Credit	n/a	n/a	6	22	32
Guardians Allowance*	n/a	n/a	180	94	100
Supplementary Benefit/Income Support	n/a	189	221	257	305
Industrial Disablement Benefit	n/a	25	22	19	18
Invalidity Benefit	n/a	n/a	71	147	159
Maternity Allowance	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	2
Mobility Allowance	n/a	n/a	15	60	n/a
One Parent Benefit	n/a	n/a	21	39	43
Sickness Benefit	n/a	n/a	26	12	12
Severe Disablement Allowance	n/a	n/a	8	22	22
Unemployment Benefit	14	23	73	29	26
Widows Benefit	n/a	n/a	23	19	18

Notes:

1. n/a indicates information not available—benefit not in existence or no caseload data available for the year shown.
2. Figures are in thousands and are rounded to the nearest thousand except for Guardians Allowance and Disability Working Allowance where the actul numbers of recipients are given.
3. Supplementary Benefit was introduced in 1966. No figures are available for the numbers receiving National Assistance in 1964.
4. Council Tax Benefit replaced Community Charge Benefit in April 1993.
5. Disability Living Allowance replaced Mobility Allowance (and Attendance Allowance for persons under 65 years) in April 1992.

Benefits Poverty Trap

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimates his Department has made for the total number of people classified as falling within the benefits poverty trap in *(a)* May 1992, *(b)* May 1993 and *(c)* the latest available date;

(2) what estimates his Department made for the total number of people classified as falling into the benefits poverty trap in *(a)* May 1992, *(b)* May 1993 and *(c)* the latest available date.

Mr. Burt: The term "poverty trap" is often used to describe a situation where, because of a combination of tax and national insurance deductions, and the withdrawal of income-related benefits, a person working on low pay receives little or no increase in income when earnings rise.

The combined rate at which tax and national insurance are deducted from earnings and income-related benefits are withdrawn is known as the marginal deduction rate. Estimates of the numbers with marginal deduction rates at or above certain rates in 1992-93 and 1993-94 can be found in the "Social Security Departmental Report", Cm. 2513, published in March this year. A copy is in the Library.

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of family credit at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The estimated outturn for family credit for 1993-94 is £1,091 million.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families were in receipt of family credit; what was the number of dependent children living in these families; and what was the average family credit payment at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: There are 1,055,000 dependent children in the 520,000 families who receive family credit. The average weekly award is £46.

Source: Family Credit Statistics: Final Quarterly Tables October 1993.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families where both spouses, or

partners living as husband and wife, are working were in receipt of family credit at the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage this is of the total number of families in receipt of family credit.

Mr. Burt: There are 22,500 families receiving family credit where both partners are working. This is 4·3 per cent. of the 520,000 families receiving family credit.
Source: Family Credit Statistics: final quarterly tables October 1993.

Homelessness

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation were income support recipients in England at May 1992 and at the latest available date, breaking down the figures by age and by whether or not they were employed at the time.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 29.

Identity Cards

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect on social security fraud of a national identity card; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Most social security fraud arises from failure to declare true circumstances—for example, working and claiming—and only a small percentage results from misrepresentations about identity. We are looking at a range of initiatives including better ways of establishing identity, to prevent or detect multiple claims and instrument of payment frauds.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the policy of the compensation recovery unit in respect of the repayment of benefits by those who have paid appropriate national insurance contributions if they win damages arising out of an industrial disease, medical neglicence, road traffic accident or industrial injury; and whether the compensation recovery unit will require those who have not paid appropriate national insurance contributions to pay back income support if they win damages arising out of industrial disease, medical negligence, road traffic accident or industrial injury.

Mr. Scott: Both contributory and non-contributory benefits, including income support, are prescribed in compensation recovery legislation. Recovery applies only when benefits are paid in consequence of the accident, injury or disease for which compensation is awarded.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to change the operations of the compensation recovery unit in so far as it affects asbestosis sufferers.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans for any such change.

Pensions (Regulation)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost to the pensions industry of the proposed pensions regulator.

Mr. Hague: Initial estimates of the cost of the new regulatory authority which was announced in the White Paper, "Security, Equality, Choice", Cm 2594, are in the order of £10 million per annum. In addition, it is expected that there will be start-up costs of around £2 million. It is proposed that these costs will be met by an annual levy on occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to consult on the levies to fund the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority and the compensation scheme, as announced in his White Paper "Security, Equality, Choice: The Future for Pensions", published on 23 June.

Mr. Hague: A consultation paper is being issued today. The paper explains how the levies will be structured, seeks views on how the costs of the levies should be distributed across the range of scheme sizes and gives some indication of the potential effect on schemes. It is being issued automatically to a number of interested parties and is available to others on request. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Independent Tribunal Service

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to conduct a quinquennial review of the independent tribunal service.

Mr. Lilley: In keeping with our commitment to continuing improvement in customer service and value for money in public services, reflected in the citizens charter, the Government have an established programme for regular reviews of non-departmental public bodies. As part of this programme, in consultation with my noble and learned Friends the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Advocate, my Department will shortly begin a quinquennial review of the organisation and management of the Independent Tribunal Service. The review will fully respect the independence of the judicial functions of the service.

Anyone who has an interest in the work of the Independent Tribunal Service is welcome to send in their views, by 30 September 1994, and, to do so, is asked first to contact:

Elizabeth Thorp
DSS
Room 1820
Euston Tower
286 Euston Road
London
NW1 3DN

The results of the review will be announced in due course.

Pensioner Incomes

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information held about pensioners' income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have today published the latest information, which is for 1992. The figures show that, on average, pensioners' total net income has risen by 50 per cent. over inflation since 1979; or 58 per cent. after housing costs have been deducted. In particular, the amount that pensioners receive from occupational pensions has increased by an average of 62 per cent., to an average weekly amount of nearly £72.

Further details are in the tables.

Copies of this reply will be placed in the Library.

Table 1: The average incomes of pensioner units by source, 1974-1992

Income source	Average income (£ per week, July 1992 prices) 1974	1979	1992	Growth Per cent. 1974-79	Per cent. 1979-92	Average income from each source as a percentage of total income 1974	1979	1992
(a) Pensioner Couples								
Earnings	32·10	26·10	20·50	−19	−22	21	16	9
Benefit Income	77·80	87·70	107·10	13	22	50	53	45
Investment Income	18·40	17·50	49·90	−5	186	12	11	21
Occupational Pension	27·00	32·60	66·10	21	102	17	20	28
Other Income	0·10	0·90	1·40	819	61	*	1	1
Total Gross Income	155·70	164·80	237·80	6	44	100	100	100
Deductions	22·20	23·80	31·60	7	33	14	14	13
Total Net Income[1]	133·50	141·00	206·20	6	46	86	86	87
Total Net Income AHC[2]	116·60	122·20	190·70	5	56	n/a	n/a	n/a
(b) Single Pensioners								
Earnings	8·10	5·90	5·10	−27	−14	10	7	4
Benefit Income	51·80	58·00	70·80	12	22	64	69	56
Investment Income	12·00	9·30	25·20	−23	172	15	11	20
Occupational Pension	8·70	10·10	24·50	16	142	11	12	19
Other Income	0·10	0·60	0·70	326	29	*	1	1
Total Gross Income	81·30	83·90	126·40	3	51	100	100	100
Deductions	10·80	10·30	17·00	−5	65	13	12	13
Total Net Income[3]	70·50	73·60	109·40	4	49	87	88	87
Total Net Income AHC[4]	59·10	60·70	93·00	3	53	n/a	n/a	n/a
(c) All Pensioner Units								
Earnings	16·40	12·90	10·90	−22	−16	15	12	6
Benefit Income	60·80	68·20	84·40	12	24	57	61	50
Investment Income	14·20	12·10	34·50	−15	185	13	11	21
Occupational Income	15·10	17·90	40·00	19	123	14	16	24
Other Income	0·10	0·70	1·00	459	46	*	1	1
Total Gross Income	107·10	111·80	168·10	4	50	100	100	100
Deductions	14·70	14·90	22·40	1	50	14	13	13
Total Net Income[5]	92·40	96·90	145·60	5	50	86	87	87
Total Net Income AHC[6]	79·00	81·90	129·50	4	58	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Median net income, at 1992 prices, was £107·60 in 1974, £111·80 in 1979 and £162·90 in 1992.
[2] Median net income after housing costs, at 1992 prices, was £103·20 in 1974, £97·90 in 1979 and £145·80 in 1992.
[3] Median net income, at 1992 prices, was £60·70 in 1974, £66·80 in 1979 and £86·30 in 1992.
[4] Median net income after housing costs, at 1992 prices, was £48·70 in 1974, £52·10 in 1979 and £62·80 in 1992.
[5] Median net income, at 1992 prices, was £65·60 in 1974, £68·40 in 1979 and £93·50 in 1992.
[6] Median net income after housing costs, at 1992 prices, was £50·00 in 1974, £62·00 in 1979 and £76·40 in 1992.

Notes:

1. Components may not sum to totals owing to rounding.
2. * denotes a figure of less than 0·5 per cent.
3. All average amounts are means unless otherwise stated.
4. All figures are before housing costs unless otherwise stated.
5. Pensioner units are defined as single people over state pension age and couples in which the husband is over state pension age.
6. "1990-91" denotes estimates from the combined sample for 1990-91. One quarter of the 1991 Family Expenditure Survey sample has been omitted because of problems in the collection of information on Community Charge payment following the delayed issue of bills in April 1991. As a result the sample size in that year is too small to provide reliable estimates of pensioner's incomes. For this reason the remaining date for 1991 has been combined with that for 1990.
7. "n/a" means Not Applicable.

Table 2: Proportion of pensioner units with investment income and the average amount for those in receipt

	Percentage of units with investment income 1974	1979	1992	Average amount for those in receipt (£ per week, 1992 prices) 1974	1979	1992	Percentage growth in average amount since 1979 1992
(a) All pensioner units							
Pensioner couples	58	71	84	31·70	24·50	59·70	144
Single pensioners	49	57	71	24·40	16·40	35·60	117
All pensioner units	52	62	76	27·20	19·70	45·60	132
(b) Recently retired pensioner units							
Pensioner couples	60	73	83	32·10	26·00	73·50	182
Single pensioners	54	60	67	20·40	15·20	51·20	236
All pensioner units	58	68	77	28·30	22·00	65·80	199

Notes:
1. Recently retired pensioner units are defined as: women aged 60-64; single men aged 65-69; and couples in which the husband is aged 65-69.
2. All average amounts are means.

Table 3: Proportion of pensioner units with occupational pension and the average amount for those in receipt

	Percentage of units with occupational pension			*Average amount for those in receipt (£ per week, 1992 prices*			*Percentage growth in average amount since 1979*
	1974	*1979*	*1992*	*1974*	*1979*	*1992*	*1992*
(a) All pensioner units							
Pensioner couples	53	65	72	51·30	52·80	92·20	75
Single Pensioners	24	32	46	37·20	35·00	52·90	51
All pensioner units	34	43	56	44·80	44·40	71·80	62
(b) Recently retired pensioner units							
Pensioner couples	53	68	73	56·20	62·10	100·30	62
Single pensioners	24	37	47	46·40	37·70	71·70	90
All pensioner units	43	55	63	54·30	55·30	91·90	66

Notes:
1. Estimates of the percentage of pensioner units in receipt of occupational pension income are based upon data from the Family Expenditure Survey and the GAD Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes. Due to this use of additional information, it is not possible to derive the overall average occupational receipt from the estimates in this table.
2. Recently retired pensioner units are defined as: single women aged 60-64; single men aged 65-69; and couples in which the husband is aged 65-69.
3. All average amounts are means.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had, and what provision he has made in his budget, in relation to the victims of crime who will no longer be sufficiently compensated by the tariff scheme of the criminal injuries compensation scheme to be able to be independent of state benefits.

Mr. Burt: None. A wide range of income-related benefits are paid to those whose income falls below a level set each year by Parliament. There are no cash limits to the income-related benefit budget as payment is made to all those who qualify.

Water Charges

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to review water charges paid by women in safe housing; if he will consider introducing a water rebate scheme for those on low incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: No. Water charges should be treated in a similar manner to other items of expenditure in the family budget.

Over-60s Card

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to make available the concessions and benefits of the European Community over-60s card to people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: No country has yet implemented the EC recommendation for an over-60s card. We are continuing our discussions with interested parties with a view to securing successful implementation in the United Kingdom.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which bodies have been consulted on his plans to introduce a test of habitual residence in the United Kingdom as a condition of entitlement to income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit; what will be the position of United Kingdom nationals who retired abroad and wish to return to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The local authority associations were consulted on the proposal to introduce a habitual residence test into income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit. The proposal was also formally referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee, which undertook a public consultation. The habitual residence test will apply to all people who claim these benefits. In the case of returning United Kingdom nationals, the adjudication authorities will be looking at whether the person has an established link with this country, for example whether they have any ties here, such as family, and why they have come back.

Rent Rebates and Allowances

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 the number of claimants of rent rebate and rent allowance, divided into fair rented and non-fair rented private sector tenants; if, following the Treasury's Summer Economic Forecast 1994, he will publish projections for each of the years from 1994-95 to 1996-97; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The information is not available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, in real terms, the cost to local authorities of a reduction in the rate of direct subsidy to local authorities for housing benefit of *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 2 per cent., *(c)* 3 per cent. and *(d)* 4 per cent.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* If there were no comparable increase in the revenue support grant,

the housing benefit direct subsidy paid to local authorities would fall by approximately £100 million per annum for each 1 per cent. reduction in the rate of direct subsidy.

HEALTH

Research and Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *97*, on employment data on administration of research and development in the national health service, if she will now make it her policy to establish arrangements to collect the data centrally.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no current plans to collect centrally such comprehensive data.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the priority-setting exercises which have been undertaken by her Department and NHS regions, and those currently under way, giving in each case (i) the amount of research funds to be allocated in each year and (ii) the total costs of the exercise in each year, showing separately the costs *(a)* to the Department of Health and NHS executive, *(b)* to the lead NHS region, *(c)* in time spent by research staff funded by the Department, *(d)* in time spent by other academic staff employed by universities, *(e)* in time spent by other NHS staff and *(f)* other costs.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* The current list of research priority setting exercises for the national health service research and development programme is shown in the table.

review exercises completed
Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke
Physical and Complex Disabilities
Primary and Secondary Care Interface
Health Technology
Cancer

review exercises underway
Mother and Child Health
Methods of implementing research findings in the Health Service
Dentistry
Diabetes

The financial costs for each of these exercises cannot be disaggregated.

The other information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total costs of her Department's research and development programme in each year from 1991-92 to 1993-94, what are the estimated costs for 1994-95 and the projected costs for each of the next five years; and if she will show, in each case, the funds allocated to (i) the centrally-funded research programme, (ii) the national health service research and development programme, (iii) running costs in the Department of Health, (iv) running costs in the NHS executive and (v) other costs, listing all significant areas of expenditure.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* Details on the Department's central research and development expenditure, including the National Health Service executive, are collected annually in the "Forward Look of Government Funded Science, Engineering and Technology".

The total costs of the Department's research and development programme, including the NHS executive research and development programme for 1991-92 to 1993-94, as quoted in the 1994 forward look are set out below. These costs are based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Frascati definition of research which excludes running costs. Details on the running costs of the Department's research and development division, which oversees the centrally commissioned and NHS executive R and D programmes, are given in the second column of the table. The running costs include all manpower and non-manpower expenditure.

Year	*£ million Research cost Total*	*£ million Actual running costs Total*
1991-92[1]	27·4	1·77
1992-93[1]	31·3	2·27
1993-94[1][2]	33·9	[3]2·55
The estimated costs for 1994-95 are as follows:		
1994-95[1]	41·2	2·58

[1] Forward Look of Government Funded Science, Engineering and Technology 1994, Statistical Supplement (HMSO) for details of total R and D spend. The information on running costs is drawn from the Departmental sources.
[2] Estimated outturn for 1993-94.
[3] Actual running costs, 1993-94.

The R and D costs of the Department of Health sponsored non-departmental public bodies are not included in the table.

All future spending and running costs of these programmes, including the NHS executive R and D programme, are subject to departmental discussions and to the decisions arising out of public expenditure rounds.

A copy of the 1994 forward look is available in the Library.

General Practitioners

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of people resident in each family health services authority area were registered with a general practitioner in 1993-94 and in the first three months of 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is published in the health service indicators set, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Child Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total public expenditure on child care services for pre-school children under the age of five years, by sector, including all local authority provision and grants to the voluntary sector, for each year from 1989-90 to 1993-94; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for England in each of these years.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average cost per annum in 1993-94 of a place in *(a)* a local authority day nursery, *(b)* a local authority family centre and *(c)* a local authority playgroup.

Mr. Bowis: Figures are not yet available for 1993-94.

Child Minders

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered child minders there are in each local authority area; and what is the average weekly payment in each area.

Mr. Bowis: The number of registered child minders in each local authority area is published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1993, England", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on payments is not recorded centrally.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *305*, what research she has undertaken into the link between growth hormone treatment, fertility treatment and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Sackville: So far, research supported by the Department has concentrated on tracing the patients treated with pituitary derived hormones and monitoring their health status. The researchers also keep in close touch with developments in other countries where these treatments were used. It is hoped that biomedical research on spongiform encephalopathies will eventually lead to the identification of the agent by which Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is transmitted.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what correspondence she has had with Dr. Bangham, former director of the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control, on the investigation into Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease undertaken in Australia.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department was first alerted to evidence linking Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease with growth hormone treatment and fertility treatment.

Mr. Sackville: On 11 April 1985.

Confidentiality

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement concerning the reason for the delay in publishing a code of practice or guidance in relation to the confidentiality of medical information.

Dr. Mawhinney: The handling of personal health information raises complex legal and ethical issues. When we have concluded our consideration of these, we will issue the draft guidance.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the view expressed in the 10 report of the Data Protection Registrar on whether Crown copyright will be readily enforceable as a remedy to counter possible extraneous uses of the new NHS number; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is seeking further legal advice on the opinion expressed in the Data Protection Registrar's report.

Patient Complaints

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of written patient complaints received by her Department in 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department receives huge amounts of correspondence in the course of a year covering the full range of its responsibilities. No separate statistics are kept of written patient complaints or letters of appreciation.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *605*, when the information about the number of official complaints received from NHS patients by each NHS hospital or trust between January and March 1994 will be available; and if she will provide the information for the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Statistics on written complaints are collected centrally on an annual basis. The latest data available are for the financial year 1992-93—"Written Complaints by or on behalf of Patients, England" and copies are available in the Library.

Capital Schemes

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the NHS major capital schemes costing £1 million or more that have been approved since 1 April 1991; and if in each case *(a)* whether the scheme is managed by an NHS trust or an NHS directly managed unit and *(b)* what is the parliamentary constituency in which the development took place.

Mr. Sackville: A list of all major national health service capital schemes costing £1 million or more approved since 1 April 1991 will be placed in the Library. To identify whether each scheme is managed by a NHS trust or directly managed unit, and the parliamentary constituency in which the development took place, could be done only at disproportionate cost.

The earlier schemes were usually initiated by directly managed units and nearly all schemes currently in progress are managed by trusts.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* her policies and *(b)* her Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if she will publish the performance indicators by which her Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if she will set out her targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Sackville: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping

inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and is currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support around the country.

The Department of Health helps small businesses through effective and proportionate regulation which takes account of the interests of small businesses, by encouraging sensible enforcement, through deregulation and by specific support and assistance.

The Department and the national health service provide equal opportunities to all potential suppliers, of whatever size, to trade on a value for money basis. Some 75 to 80 per cent. of national health service suppliers are small businesses.

On deregulation, the removal of unnecessary burdens on small business is an important consideration in the Department's review of regulations which we aim to complete by December 1994. The Department is active in promoting exports of health care goods and services, many of which are produced by small businesses. The prompt payment of bills, especially important to small businesses, is also taken seriously. In 1993-94, this Department paid 87·1 per cent. of its bills within an agreed credit period, or within 30 days. Prompt payment of creditors is also vigorously pursued in the national health service.

As it is not practicable to monitor centrally the precise extent to which the national health service or the Department makes use of small businesses, no performance indicators are maintained.

Nurses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure there will continue to be adequate numbers of qualified nurses to maintain the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Regions commission training places for non-medical staff, including nurses, based on provider unit forecasts.

Publications

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the design and publication costs, *(b)* the numbers printed, *(c)* the printing costs and *(d)* the distribution costs of the "National Health Service News" issued of 3 June.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is as follows:

	£
Design	376
Number printed	17,000
Printing costs	5,436
Distribution costs	3,809

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the design and publication costs, *(b)* the numbers printed, *(c)* the printing costs and *(d)* the distribution costs of the publication "Women Managers in the National Health Service".

Mr. Sackville: Some 5,000 copies of "Women Managers in the NHS—A Celebration of Success" were produced. The costs were:

	£
Design and publication costs	11,350·73
Printing costs	20,570·00

Distribution of the publication was carried out by the Department's in-house distribution unit and these costs cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the numbers printed, *(b)* the printing costs and *(c)* the distribution costs of the publication, "Code of Conduct—Code of Accountability".

Mr. Sackville: The information requested for printing and distribution of "Code of Conduct—Code of Accountability" is shown in the table.

	Cost
Number printed	20,000
Printing costs	£7,509
Distribution costs	£1,922

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the design and publication costs, *(b)* the numbers printed, *(c)* the printing costs and *(d)* the distribution costs of the publication "Opportunity 2000: The Challenge in General Practice".

Mr. Sackville: Some 5,000 copies of "Opportunity 2000: The Challenge in General Practice" were produced. In addition, 500 copies of ancillary reports are expected to be produced in this financial year at no extra cost. The photographs taken for this publication will be used in other publications.

Costs are as follows:

	£
Writing/Design/Photography	13,342
Print	5,638

Distribution of the publication was carried out by the Department's in-house distribution unit and these costs cannot be separately identified.

Family Health Services

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *35-6*, on family health services expenditure, if she will update the information to include figures for 1993-94 and estimates for 1994-95; and if she will recalculate the appropriate figures in the new table on the basis of current prices.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available information has been incorporated in the table.

Family health services net expenditure
England

£ million

Year	*[1,5] FHS expenditure*	*[2,5] Drugs bill expenditure*	*[3] Drugs bill expenditure at 1994-95 prices*	*[4,5] Other FHS expenditure*	*[3] Other FHS expenditure at 1994-95 prices*	*[5] FHSA administration expenditure*	*[3] FHSA administration expenditure at 1994-95 prices*
1973-74	522	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	83
1974-75	630	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1975-76	854	277	1,176	577	2,444	n/a	n/a
1976-77	993	361	1,348	632	2,361	n/a	n/a
1977-78	1,123	461	1,515	662	2,175	n/a	n/a
1978-79	1,329	554	1,638	775	2,292	n/a	n/a
1979-80	1,549	633	1,603	916	2,320	n/a	n/a
1980-81	1,923	766	1,641	1,157	2,477	n/a	n/a
1981-82	2,208	876	1,711	1,331	2,599	n/a	n/a
1982-83	2,547	1,009	1,838	1,538	2,803	n/a	n/a
1983-84	2,730	1,130	1,968	1,600	2,786	n/a	n/a
1984-85	3,010	1,192	1,976	1,818	3,014	n/a	n/a
1985-86	3,188	1,275	2,002	1,914	3,006	45	71
1986-87	3,419	1,378	2,103	2,041	3,115	47	72
1987-88	3,802	1,536	2,226	2,265	3,282	49	71
1988-89	4,293	1,744	2,368	2,549	3,460	55	75
1989-90	4,531	1,942	2,466	2,589	3,287	67	85
1990-91	5,156	2,080	2,443	3,076	3,614	104	122
1991-92	5,944	2,317	2,561	3,627	4,009	136	150
1992-93	6,593	2,641	2,809	3,952	4,203	162	172
1993-94	6,976	2,951	3,040	4,025	4,146	n/a	n/a
1994-95	7,401	3,177	3,177	4,224	4,224	n/a	n/a

[1] Net expenditure, after taking account of patient charges and other receipts, on the General Medical, General Dental, General Ophthalmic and Pharmaceutical Services. Excludes administrative costs of FHSAs and other bodies and GP Fundholders budgets for purchasing secondary care services. Information is based on the relevant year's Appropriation Account unless otherwise indicated.
[2] Represents the cost of items prescribed by GPs. Dispensing fees are not included. Costs are not separately identifiable in 1973-74 and 1974-75.
[3] Converted to 1994-95 prices using GDP deflator.
[4] Balance of net FHS expenditure minus the cost of the drugs bill. Consists mainly of the cost of remuneration and practice expenses of FHS contractors.
[5] 1993-94 outturn figures are provisional; 1994-95 figures are estimates.

Note:
Net administrative expenditure of Family Health Services Authorities (known as Family Practitioner Committees before September 1990, and as Executive Councils before April 1974). The administrative functions of FHSAs and their precedessors have changed over time as their management responsibilities have been developed. Expenditure was not separately identifiable in the period 1974-75 to 1984-85. Excludes expenditure on national administrative bodies such as the Prescription Pricing Authority and the Dental Practice Board. Information is based on FHSA's income and expenditure accounts. 1993-94 information is not yet available on a comparable basis with previous year's figures. No forecast is available centrally for 1994-95 as FHSA administrative budgets are determined locally by Regional Health Authorities from within their overall cash limit.

Dental Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations underpinned her decision not to provide a Minister or civil servant to be interviewed for the BBC "Panorama" programme on the health risks of mercuric amalgam used in tooth fillings, broadcast on 11 July.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department gave the programme makers a statement on the safety of dental amalgam.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been commissioned by her Department into the potential threats posed from mercury vapours leaking from amalgam used as tooth fillings.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has undertaken into mercury contamination arising from fillings.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 14 July, *Official Report*, column 702.

Out-of-school Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total public expenditure on out-of-school services for children from the age of five for each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for England for each of these years.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available centrally in this Department for all the services provided locally and nationally, directly and indirectly.

Community Health Councils

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions she has had with the National Association of Community Health Councils; and what plans she has to meet representatives of the National Association of Community Health Councils in the near future.

Dr. Mawhinney: I addressed the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales' conference on complaints on 14 June and spoke at the association's annual general meeting both last year and on 12 July this year. I also met the chairman and director of ACHCEW on 4 July. We will continue to have regular contact with representatives of ACHCEW.

Community Care

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take measures to ensure that a percentage of the special transitional grant to local authorities for community care spending is ring fenced for spending in the independent health care sector.

Mr. Bowis: We have already required local authorities to spend 85 per cent. of the social security transfer element of their special transitional grant in 1993-94 and 1994-95 on services provided by the independent sector.

Corporal Punishment

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidance as to the age of a child to which a child minder may administer corporal punishment with parental consent.

Mr. Bowis: We have studied the recent High Court judgment. I have already met representatives of Families for Discipline and voluntary sector organisations representing day care providers and I shall shortly be meeting local authority representatives. In due course we shall consider whether any clarification of the Department's guidance is necessary.

Waiting Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *605*, when the information about the average time that patients in *(a)* England, *(b)* each English regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust waited from the date that their general practitioner referred them to a consultant until the date of their first out-patient appointment in the period January to March 1994 will be available; and if she will provide the information for the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 13 July, *Official Report*, column *605*.

Nurse Education and Training

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to provide for the retraining and redeployment of nurse teachers who are displaced as a result of the proposed reduction in the number of nursing students.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for individual employers.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost of the changes in nurse education since 1989 which result from the introduction of Project 2000.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1989-90 and 1994-95, the Government have invested £431 million to introduce Project 2000 in England.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a breakdown of the spending on nurse education and training for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 identifying the spending allocated to *(a)* pre-registration education; *(b)* post-registration education and *(c)* nurse teacher training and support.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for the total expenditure by regional health authorities on nurse education and training for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are shown in the table. A breakdown in the requested categories was not available centrally in those years. Information for 1990-91 was not collected centrally, figures for 1993-94 are currently being collected.

£ million

	1991-92	*1992-93*
Total Annual Expenditure by RHAs on Nurse Education and training	476·837	521·637

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision was made in allocations for regional health authorities for nurse education in each of the last three financial years; how much was spent by regional health authorities in each of those years; and how she treats funds so allocated but not spent for the purpose of nurse education.

Mr. Sackville: For 1991-92 and 1992-93, the following allocations towards the cost of pre-registration nurse education and nurse teacher training were made to the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting; and to regional health authorities in respect of Project 2000 costs. For 1993-94, funds for pre-registration nurse education were transferred to regional health authorities. Funds allocated to the board are returnable to the Department to the extent that they are not used for the purposes specified. Those allocated to regions may be used for other education and training purposes if the demand for pre-registration nurse education and training has been met in full.

£ million

Allocations	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
National Board	132	138	10
Regional Health Authorities	62	87	238

Alternative Therapists

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints have been received about alternative therapists in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: These figures are not available centrally.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to regulate alternative therapists and subject them to codes of practice;

(2) if she will consider the regulation of psychic healers and hypnotherapists; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has no plans to impose regulation on alternative therapists such as psychic healers and hypnotherapists. We do, however, encourage voluntary regulation schemes that have an enforceable code of practice.

Homoeopathy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what caused the North Mersey national health service trust to close the homoeopathic ward at Mossley Hill hospital;

for how long the ward will be closed; what resources are provided for homoeopathy in the north-west of England; what other homoeopathic wards exist in the region; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for North Mersey community national health service trust and for North West regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. James, chairman of North Mersey community NHS trust, and Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of North West regional health authority, for details.

Medical Devices Directorate

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress towards establishing her Department's medical devices directorate as an executive agency.

Mr. Sackville: I am pleased to be able to announce that the medical devices directorate will be established as the Medical Devices Agency from September.

The primary purpose of the MDA is to protect the public health and safeguard the interests of patients and users by ensuring that medical devices and equipment meet appropriate standards of safety, quality and performance. The agency will be the competent authority for the United Kingdom under European Community directives for medical devices. The MDA's aims, objectives and functions are set out in a framework document, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

The chief executive has been set a number of performance targets for 1994-95, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

NHS Pensions Agency

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for reviewing the NHS Pensions Agency.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS Pensions Agency is responsible for the administration of the national health service pensions scheme. As part of its already announced programme of market testing, the agency was intending this year to carry out a scoping study to identify which of the agency's core functions might be suitable for market testing in some form. This study would, by its nature, have looked at most of the questions which would be addressed in the prior options exercise which forms part of the normal three-year agency review process.

In the case of the NHS Pensions Agency, the three-year review is due to be completed by the end of 1995. I have therefore decided to formalise the agency's market-testing scoping study and subsume it within the first, prior options, stage of the agency's review, which will be publicised in the usual way. This part of the review will take place in the autumn of 1994. The other elements of the full review of the agency—evaluation of its performance and revision of the framework document—will then be carried out in late-1995 to the usual timetable. This two-stage process will avoid what would otherwise have been an unnecessary duplication of effort next year.

I would welcome contributions to the prior options review from those with an interest in the work of the agency. The review will have the usual terms of reference —viz, to look again at the prior options questions for the NHS Pensions Agency by re-examining the feasibility of abolition, privatisation, sub-contracting, or market-testing, of any of the agency's functions. Comments should be sent by 30 September 1994 to:

Ms Ann Gross
NHS Pensions Review Team
Room 259C
Skipton House
80 London Road
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6LW.

Health Promotion

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking to encourage the national health service trusts to collaborate with environmental health and education services and other public services within local authorities in the prevention of illness and disease.

Mr. Sackville: Joint interim guidance from the Departments of Health and the Environment, HSG(93)56, "Public Health Responsibilities of the NHS and Roles of Others", was issued on 24 November 1993 and copies are available in the Library. The guidance emphasises the need for all authorities and agencies to work within a co-ordinated and comprehensive public health strategy and share information to achieve the best possible health for their population including arrangements for the control of communicable disease and infection and for dealing with the health aspects of non-communicable environmental hazards.

The handbook "Working Together for Better Health", published in July last year in the context of the "Health of the Nation" strategy, set out the importance of collaboration between the national health service, local authorities and other local groups in the prevention of illness; gave guidance on the setting up and maintenance of healthy alliances; and gave examples of alliances in which both NHS trusts and local authorities are involved. Copies of the handbook will be placed in the Library.

Health Authorities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with local purchasing health authorities regarding the performance of hospital trusts; and if she will specify the authorities concerned and the content of the discussion.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of their performance management responsibilities, regional offices of the national health service executive discuss with purchasers factors which affect local purchasing decisions, including changing patterns of service provision. These, in turn, will be affected by the performance of individual trusts.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what improvements have been made to improve transmission information between trusts and national health authorities in order that they may make the purchase of patient care more accurate.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service executive, in partnership with the national health service, is working,

through a national information management and technology strategy, to create an environment to improve the quality and sustain the effective sharing of information across the health service.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he ensures that health authorities are producing appropriate levels of health care.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regional offices of the national health service executive assess progress in key areas of the work of the NHS.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of health authorities moving funds between different budget heads on health care and the provision of social services.

Mr. Bowis: None.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will redistribute funds from fundholding general practitioners who have underspent to those who have overspent.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had about, and what provisions she has made in her budget for, victims of crime who will no longer be sufficiently compensated by the tariff scheme of the criminal injuries compensation scheme to be independent of the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Treatment under the national health service is provided free to all at the point of delivery on the basis of clinical need irrespective of whether that need results from a criminal injury. I have no plans to make any additional provision.

Mr. John Shepard

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she proposes to take to prevent a recurrence of the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. John Shepard in Brent;

(2) if she will establish an independent inquiry into the circumstance surrounding the death of Mr. John Shepard and the subsequent actions of Brent council;

(3) whether she has received notification from Brent council of its decision not to establish an independent inquiry into the death of Mr. John Shepard.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 18 July, *Official Report*, column 20. We expect the local authority to take any necessary action. We have no plans for Government action in addition to this.

Elderly People (Care)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities as to the management of the care of elderly people living on their own in local authority property.

Mr. Bowis: Policy and practice guidance issued by the Department about the care of elderly and other vulnerable people applies equally to local authority tenants and those living in other forms of accommodation.

GPs (Practice Administration)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *833*, how many hours weekly on average were actually spent by general practitioners on practice administration between November 1992 and November 1993, as found by the survey of general practitioners' work loads; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The results for the full survey period are being analysed. For the interim results, based on the first seven months' data, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 17 March at column *833*.

Psychologists (Availability)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many more psychologists have become available since the introduction of care in the community to facilitate the programme; and how is the increase funded.

Mr. Bowis: Clinical psychologists are employed in the national health service on a variety of duties in both the hospital and community health sectors. The total number of clinical psychologists working in the national health service in the period since 1984 is shown in the table.

Clinical psychologists
England
30 September 1984 to 1992

Whole-time equivalents

Year	*Number*
1984	1,180
1985	1,310
1986	1,380
1987	1,430
1988	1,660
1989	1,740
1990	1,730
1991	1,760
1992	2,000

Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. Assistants and trainees are excluded.

Organ Donation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on assisting the voluntary donation of organs of the body both before death and after death; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The Government encourage people to donate their organs after death; are committed to increasing the supply of donor organs for transplantation; and have introduced a number of initiatives to this end. In March 1993, the use of television advertising was used for the first time and this was followed up with a further television campaign last March. Also from 1 March last year, all new driving licences now contain a donor declaration box. Other measures include improved procedures for hospitals and staff involved in organ procurement, a reimbursement scheme for hospitals whose intensive care units look after potential donors, research into the reasons why some

relatives refuse permission to use organs and a feasibility study into a computerised national register of organ donors. Publicity material is made available to the public in support of organ donation and the donor card scheme.

The possibility of donation by a live donor is a very serious matter requiring expert counselling of the patient and the potential donor by experienced doctors. The final decision to participate in such a procedure must remain with the potential donor.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Compensation Awards

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many victims were asked by the courts to waive compensation awards in each of the last three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department does not hold this information. Some information about compensation orders—for example, the number of offenders ordered to pay, is contained in "Home Office Criminal Statistics England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library of the House. Additional information about compensation orders could be collected only at a disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Luff: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has for the future of the Legal Aid Advisory Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Advisory Committee was set up in 1949. Its purpose then was to comment on the way in which the Law Society administered the legal aid scheme and to give the Lord Chancellor advice and recommendations about legal aid. The Committee has done much valuable work over many years and the Lord Chancellor and I are grateful to all its past and present members for the work they have done.

The establishment of the Legal Aid Board in 1989 meant that a significant element of the committee's role no longer existed. The committee was however kept in being in order to establish whether there was a continuing useful role for it to play.

The Lord Chancellor has recently reviewed the position in the light of experience since 1989 and has concluded that the changing circumstances since the Legal Aid Board was established have meant that there is no longer a need for a separate Legal Aid Advisory Committee.

The Lord Chancellor and I have always welcomed advice from any quarter on the operation of the legal aid scheme, and will continue to do so. Unlike the position when the Legal Aid Advisory Committee was established, there are now many bodies and organisations that are interested in, and regularly comment on, developments in legal aid. The Lord Chancellor and I are satisfied that the advice that we receive from them, together with the independent advice, based on its experience of running the legal aid scheme, that we receive from the Legal Aid Board, and the involvement in legal aid matters of the Home Affairs Select Committee, give us access to the widest possible range of views and opinions. We also intend to develop our programme of research into legal aid matters.

The Lord Chancellor will therefore shortly be laying before both Houses of Parliament an order providing for the dissolution of the Legal Aid Advisory Committee.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the 10 highest contributions made out of the legal aid fund to assist individuals in the last five years, the individuals involved and the nature of the proceedings.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 25 May 1994]:* The table shows the 10 highest gross payments—including VAT—made in individual cases—excluding civil multi-party actions—in the last five years. It is not usually possible to disaggregate payments to individuals in cases involving more than one assisted party.

	£ million
1. Barlow-Clowes (fraud)	4·70
2. Strangeways II (riot)	2·77
3. Britannia Park (theft)	2·63
4. Ankara II—Benn & Others (revenue law offence)[1]	2·42
5. Brinks-Matt (robbery)[1]	2·16
6. Actie & Others (murder)	1·88
7. Eagle Starr (fraud)[1]	1·76
8. Hatton & Others (fraud)	1·75
9. Strangeways I (riot)	1·73
10. Aveling-Barford (fraud)[2]	1·52

[1] Subject to redetermination.
[2] Subject to appeal.

The table details payments made only in respect of final bills submitted. It does not include cases where proceedings are continuing and where interim payments have been made. Excluding multi-party actions, only two cases involving interim payments of £1 million or more have been identified. In proceedings between Dr. Jawad Hashim and the Arab monetary fund, which concerns the administration of trusts, claims amounting to £4 million have been received to date and some 2·8 million has been paid on account. Some £1·8 million has been paid on account in respect of Graham and Graham, an action for damages to property. In civil proceedings, however, legal aid costs may be recovered, in part or in full, from any costs or damages received on behalf of the assisted party.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years;

(3) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has not employed any special advisers during the past five years.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population and Reproductive Health

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Overseas Development Administration's spending on population and reproductive health spending has changed in cash and constant price terms in the past five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Spending on population and reproductive health activities is estimated at some £32 million in 1993, compared with just over £17 million in 1989; this represents an 83 per cent. increase in cash terms and nearly a 50 per cent. increase in constant price terms.

Street Children

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries and the amount of funding given by Her Majesty's Government to help develop projects involving street children in those countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following amounts have been provided to non-governmental organisations to support projects aimed at assisting street children:

	Financial year		
	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
	£	£	£
Albania	—	14,225	—
Bangladesh	27,539	52,280	—
Bolivia	2,375	2,375	—
Brazil	8,628	45,315	88,527
Bulgaria	—	—	4,595
Chad	11,191	3,103	—
Egypt	8,048	2,126	—
Haiti	8,297	—	—
India	—	28,743	—
Peru	—	51,515	45,893
Philippines	—	7,446	7,284
Romania	3,000	5,300	900
South Africa	—	—	28,054
Tanzania	—	—	8,242
	69,078	212,428	183,495

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he will take to enable training and enterprise councils to ensure that young people with special training needs receive support including counselling and advocacy which will enable them to complete their training successfully.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils are obliged through their contract with the Department to arrange for young people entering training to be assessed and given an individual training plan suited to their needs and abilities. Where special training needs are identified, the training plan must be individually designed to give the support and help required to enable the young people to make such progress towards general and vocational competences as lies within their reach. Training plans and progress against them are regularly reviewed and any necessary changes agreed between the trainee and the training provider.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to ensure that young people with special training needs will be able to take full advantage of the modern apprenticeship scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he wants to see modern apprenticeships open equally to all young people. We are asking industry training organisations to take account of all aspects of equal opportunities in apprenticeship models they develop including provision for the assessment and endorsement of special training needs. We shall continue to place a contractual requirement on training and enterprise councils to ensure equality of opportunity in all their activities.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *406*, whether he is satisfied with the apparent discrimination against the employment of men at the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Miss Widdecombe: Employing more people of one sex than the other does not of itself prove discrimination. The Commission follows good equal opportunities practice in recruiting its own staff, and as one would expect, considers all candidates on their merits regardless of gender, race or other factors.

Unemployment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of male and female unemployment within the Greater London area at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: In June 1994, seasonally adjusted unemployment in Greater London stood at 323,000 for men and 111,000 for women, down 8 per cent. and 7 per cent. respectively on December 1992.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the gender and ethnic origin of registered unemployed in the United Kingdom for each year since 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table gives the information available from the labour force survey:

Number of ILO unemployed people by gender and ethnic origin

Thousands

Great Britain	*Not seasonally adjusted*		
	Spring 1992	*Spring 1993*	*Winter 1993-94*
All people	2,649	2,804	2,737
White	2,422	2,528	2,461
Non-white	224	276	276
Black	86	110	103
Indian	59	58	61
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	43	61	58
Mixed/other origins	36	48	53
Men	1,785	1,904	1,833
White	1,633	1,721	1,650
Non-white	151	183	183
Black	60	73	65
Indian	34	37	37
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	34	46	45
Mixed/other origins	23	27	34
Women	863	900	904
White	789	807	811
Non-white	73	93	93
Black	27	37	37
Indian	25	21	24
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	[1]—	15	13
Mixed/other origins	13	21	20

[1]— Estimate less than 10,000 not shown.
Source: Labour Force Survey.

Race Relations

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have sought guidance from the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service in each year since 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The Race Relations Employment Advisory Service does not keep records on the number of inquiries it receives. It has made the following advisory visits to employers: 1,113, 1991-92; 1,075, 1992-93; 1,177, 1993-94; and 320 in the currrent operational year, from 1 April to 30 June 1994.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what operational plans he has for the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service for the years 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Miss Widdecombe: In common with all parts of the Employment Department, the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service agrees an annual operational plan with its departmental line management. All such plans run from April to March and seek to implement the Employment Department's objectives.

The aim of RREAS for 1994-95 is to provide advice and guidance on racial quality in employment to those employers who are either unaware of or initially resistant to equal opportunities or at an early stage in the development of an effective policy and require expert strategic advice and guidance in taking it forward.

Plans for the service for 1995-96 will be agreed early in 1995.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the last five years four special advisers have joined this Department and four have left:

1989—none joined, one left;
1990—one joined, none left;
1991—no joiners and no leavers;
1992—two joined, two left;
1993—one joined and one left.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Vocational Training

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals the Government have for further reform of the national vocational qualification system assessment and monitoring procedures.

Miss Widdecombe: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications and SCOTVEC in Scotland set the criteria for the assessment and quality assurance of national vocational qualifications, and Scottish vocational qualifications in Scotland. At my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's request, the NCVQ is currently reviewing the criteria.

The White Paper on competitiveness, announced on 24 May by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, provides for NCVQ to strengthen its role in the local quality assurance arrangements for national vocational qualifications.

The White Paper also included proposals for further work to enhance and improve the NVQ system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to establish a departmental inquiry into allegations of inadequacies in vocational training in colleges of further education.

Miss Widdecombe: No. The Department's internal audit is investigating certain allegations related to the award of national vocational qualifications. No wider inquiry is planned by the Department.

Employment Service

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to conduct a prior options review of the Employment Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As a next steps agency, the Employment Service is subject to the normal prior options tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review", Cm. 2430. A prior options review of the Employment Service will now be undertaken, with the aim of reporting to Ministers by the end of March 1995.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the Employment Service and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 28 October 1994 to Peter Makeham, Director of Strategy and Employment Policy Division, Employment Department, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NF.

International Labour Conventions

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the application to the United Kingdom of international labour conventions Nos. 99 and 101.

Mr. David Hunt: In her statement of 14 July, *Official Report,* column *715,* concerning the future of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food referred to the need for the Government to be free to make suitable arrangements for the industry when considering the board's future. This reflects calls by employers in the industry for the Government to denounce International Labour Oganisation conventions 99 and 101 so that the requirements of the conventions will not present any obstacle to the development over the next few years of more flexible working arrangements within the industry. The Government propose to denounce both conventions.

The denunciations will take effect 12 months after the date on which they are registered with the ILO.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what scheme will replace the learning for work courses.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* Learning for work will not be replaced by another scheme next year. The Department, through training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service, provides a range of programmes and services to help unemployed people prepare for work. Training for work, career development loans, job clubs and restart courses all play an important part in this package of help.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report* columns *400-1*, which other officials of the Hong Kong Government, including officials of the Law Officers' Department such as Crown prosecuting counsel, visited Malaysia in connection with the affair generally known as Carrian; on what dates; and on how many occasions, and for what purpose in relation to the Carrian investigation Mr. Warwick Reid visited Malaysia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are very few, if any, visits to Malaysia by members of the Attorney-General's chambers in connection with the Carrian case. Full details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the view of the credibility of Ibrahim Jaafar as expressed by judges of the Hong Kong High Court from time to time; and whether Mr. Jaafar adhered to the terms of his grant of immunity by co-operating with the relevant Hong Kong authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Mr. Jaafar is a Crown witness in the BMFL trial in Hong Kong. To comment on his credibility would not be right.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report* columns *397-98*, on what dates and to whom parts of Mr. Mak's statement was relayed at any other time prior to his trial to parties other than those involved in the investigation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: With the exception of the bodies named in my answer of today, this information is not centrally recorded, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report* column *397*, whether it is the policy of the Hong Kong Government to have the contents of statements made by suspects in custody relayed to Government Departments in London.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no reason why the content of a statement taken by law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong should not be relayed to Government Departments in London if it is in the public interest to do so.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the name of the Hong Kong official who granted immunity from prosecution to Mr. Ibrahim Jaafar; and what was the relationship between that official and Mr. Warwick Reid.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The immunity was granted by the then Director of Public Prosecutions in Hong Kong in consultation with the Hong Kong Attorney-General. The letter offering immunity was signed by Mr. Reid in his capacity as head of the commercial crimes unit of the prosecutions division of the Attorney-General's chambers.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report* column *99*, why Mr. Warwick Reid was dismissed from his post in January 1990; whether Mr. Reid was prosecuted; what process of law was used to obtain the return of Mr. Warwick Reid from the Philippines to Hong Kong; and which Government requested, and which Government executed, that legal process.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Mr. Reid was dismissed from his post in the Attorney-General's chambers when it was discovered that he had breached the conditions of his bail by absconding from Hong Kong. On his return to Hong Kong he was prosecuted, and convicted, for an offence of having in his control pecuniary resources or property disproportionate to his official emoluments contrary to section 10 of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance. Mr. Reid was deported from the Philippines when he was found to have entered that country on a forged travel document and was repatriated to Hong Kong as his last known place of residence in accordance with procedures in the Philippines.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those occasions on which the Malaysian Attorney-General, Mr. Abu Talib, approached his Department or other Government Departments in London, in relation to the prosecution of Lorrain Osman; and if he will list those occasions on which the Malaysian Attorney-General approached Government officials in Hong Kong in relation to the prosecution of Lorrain Osman.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is established practice that exchanges of this kind between Governments are confidential.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *397-98*, which parties named by Mr. Mak Foon Than were interviewed subsequently in relation to his statement; and on which dates they were interviewed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following persons named in Mak Foon Than's statement were interviewed by the Royal Hong Kong police:

George Tan on 9 August 1983;
Lorrain Osman on three occasions in July and August 1983;
Henry Chin on seven occasions in July and August 1983 and on one occasion in March 1984;
Ibrahim Jaafar in August 1983;
Chueng Suk-Kwan on 8 August 1983;
Raja Nasron on 15 September 1983;
Tan Keng-Cheng on 16 September 1983; and
Lee Chong-Kay on 19 September 1983.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the name of the Hong Kong official who made the charges initiated against Mr. Lorrain Osman in 1985; and what was the relationship between that official and Mr. Warwick Reid.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The charges against Mr. Lorrain Osman were drafted by counsel having the conduct of the case within the prosecutions division of the Attorney-General's chambers in consultation with leading counsel in London. Mr. Warwick Reid was not directly involved in the charging process other than in his capacity as head of the commercial crimes unit of those chambers in which it is likely that he would have been shown a copy of the charges settled by counsel.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *397*, who advised him of the contents of the statement made by Mr. Mak Foon Than; why that information was relayed to his Department; and what other Government offices, including the United Kingdom high commission in Malaysia, were informed of the contents of Mak Foon Than's statement prior to the trial of Mr. Mak.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Hong Kong Government kept the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed of the progress of investigations related to the collapse of the Carrian Group and the affairs of Bank Bumiputra and its Hong Kong subsidiary BMFL. Papers connected with these investigations were copied to the Bank of England and to the British high commissioner in Malaysia.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Mr. Warwick Reid was interrogated or questioned or made a voluntary statement in relation to his role in the prosecution of Lorrain Osman at the time of his arrest or subsequently.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Mr. Reid was interviewed in relation to this matter.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of Vietnamese boat people still being held in detention centres in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 1 July, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 24,920 Vietnamese migrants in detention centres in Hong Kong.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he received a copy of the report of the incidents that took place at the Whitehead detention centre in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement on that report.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We received a summary of the report's main findings and recommendations on 15 June, the day the report was published. We received a copy of the report itself shortly afterwards.

We accept the report's findings and welcome the Hong Kong Government's readiness to act on its recommendations.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administration burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are establishing a network of Business Links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

The Department, together with the Department of Trade and Industry, through the Overseas Trade Services, provides advice, information, and financial support to help United Kingdom exporters win overseas business. This work is particularly aimed at smaller and less experienced exporters. An independent survey of the delivery of the services shows a consistently high level of customer satisfaction and some 90 per cent. of respondents regularly say that they will use the services again. Details of these chargeable services are given in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office departmental report 1994.

Small firms are given full opportunity to bid for business with the Department. It remains our firm policy to pay invoices on time.

Business transacted by the Department with small firms in the United Kingdom was £35·7 million in 1993-94 when it accounted for 27·6 per cent. of total expenditure on the purchase of goods and services—1992-93: £35·8 million; 26·9 per cent.

The Department has no specific targets to favour small business, but will ensure that small firms continue to be given full opportunity to compete equally and fairly.

Kuwait

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Kuwait; what assistance has been given by the Foreign Office to British companies seeking to help with Kuwait's reconstruction programme following the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last visited Kuwait in May 1992 to attend an EC/Gulf Co-operation Council ministerial meeting. The British embassy in Kuwait was one of the first to open after liberation and its staff played an important role in helping United Kingdom companies win orders associated with the reconstruction programme. The FCO was also represented on a DTI/industry task force set up to help British exporters. In the first 12 months of the initial reconstruction phase, the United Kingdom won contracts and orders worth over £550 million.

The official figures for United Kingdom exports to Kuwait for 1991, 1992 and 1993 are £178 million, £262 million and £312 million respectively. Exports are now at their highest level for six years.

West Bank

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the allegations of torture against students from Bir Zeit university in the west bank who were arrested on 29 June in an Israel defence force raid; and what representations he intends to make to the Israeli Government on the issue.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The consulate-general in Jerusalem is in touch with Bir Zeit university and the International Committee of the Red Cross about the arrest of the students and about their conditions of detention. We, along with our EU partners, have raised the question of law enforcement in the occupied territories with the Israeli authorities, and stressed that it is important to avoid excessive use of force. We regularly remind the Israelis of their obligations under the fourth Geneva convention.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which section of the United Nations is responsible for arranging the deployment of United Nations forces in Rwanda; and whether he considers that section adequate in terms of quality of personnel, amount of resources and level of political support.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Kofi Annan, is responsible for arranging the deployment of United Nations forces in Rwanda. He enjoys the support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and receives all necessary political support. The level of DPKO's resources and the quality of its personnel are kept under continual review by the Secretary-General. The United Kingdom is supporting DPKO through the provision of eight seconded British officers.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the principal causes of the further delay in the deployment of United Nations troops in Rwanda in terms of troops committed, and logistical support.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations has identified logistic support as the priority requirement to enable more troops to be deployed with the United Nations Aid Mission in Rwanda and while a number of countries have pledged troops they cannot be deployed until that support is in place. The United States, South Africa and the United Kingdom have offered logistical support in response to specific United Nations requests.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on a continued commitment of French troops in Rwanda beyond the end of July.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: United Nations Security Council resolution 929 of 22 June, which we supported, authorised the French Government to launch a two-month humanitarian mission to Rwanda. Their mandate does not expire until 22 August.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures exist in the United Nations for a change in the presidency of the Security Council if a country is unfit, for whatever reason, to take over the presidency.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council do not contain any provisions for changing the presidency of the Council in the circumstances described. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave him on 18 July, column 26, which said that consultations are in train over the question of Rwanda's presidency of the council.

Taiwan

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present procedures for the issuing of entry visas to citizens of Taiwan; for what reason a separate declaration of identity is required; and whether he has this system under review.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Visas for citizens of Taiwan are issued on form GV3 "Declaration of Identity for Visa Purposes".

Declarations of identity are used because we do not recognise Taiwan as a state. We cannot therefore recognise passports issued by the "Republic of China", so the visa is stamped on a separate piece of paper rather than into the passport itself. This is inescapable for legal reasons. We have recently revised the format of the GV3 to make it as convenient as possible for the traveller.

The visa handling unit of the British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei provides a quick and efficient 24-hour service. We do not believe that the visa- issuing process discourages travellers, of whom there were nearly 52,000 in 1993.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In 1989, two special advisers left my Department and one joined. In 1990, one special adviser joined my Department and left in the same year. One special adviser joined in 1991. One special adviser left in 1993, and one joined.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

HGV Drivers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom heavy goods vehicle drivers are currently in prison in *(a)* France, *(b)* Spain, *(c)* Portugal, *(d)* Italy and *(e)* the whole of the European Union except the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Those known by the British Government to be United Kingdom heavy goods vehicle drivers and currently in prison are as follows:

France	4
Spain	3
Portugal	0
Italy	1
European Union	10

Bangladesh

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many spouses seeking entry clearance in Dhaka have been refused in each of the past four years; and what percentage they form of the total number of such applicants.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of spouses' entry clearance applications refused in Dhaka and the percentage of the total numbers of such applications during 1991-93 is:

Year	*Total spouse applications*	*Spouses refused*	*Percentage*
1991	1,852	301	16
1992	2,614	414	16
1993	2,446	501	20

Comparable data are not available for earlier years.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers have worked in Dhaka in each of the last four years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of entry clearance officers in Dhaka in each of the last four years is:

1993—12+1 temporary duty
1992—16+2 temporary duty
1991—18
1990—16

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the average monthly number of refusals in the period since the abolition of appeals for visitors from Bangladesh; and what percentage they represent of the total number of applications.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The average monthly number of refusals of entry clearance applications for visitors from Bangladesh for the period July 1993 to May 1994 was 297. This represents 24·7 per cent. of the average monthly number of visitor applications. The comparable figure for the period August 1992 to July 1993 was 258, 22·3 per cent.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many appeals were rejected in each month in the year prior to the abolition of appeals for visitors from Bangladesh; and what percentage they represent of the total number of applications.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Available information on appeals relates to those against a refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes. The number of such appeals by citizens of Bangladesh which were dismissed by adjudicators in the period August 1992 to July 1993 were:

	Number
1992	
August	47
September	75
October	134
November	43
December	69
1993	
January	105
February	65
March	49
April	52
May	43
June	60
July	40
	782

During the period August 1992 to July 1993, 13,870 such applications were made, of which 3,091—22·3 per cent.—were refused; 782 of those refused lodged appeals. Of that 782, 74 per cent. were dismissed, 13 per cent. withdrawn and 13 per cent. allowed.

The figure for appeals dismissed therefore equates to 5·6 per cent. of the total number of visit applications received in Dhaka.

Law of the Sea Convention

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answers of 14 June, *Official Report,* columns 401-2, whether Her Majesty's Government have now reached a conclusion as to whether to vote for the resolution and sign the agreement relating to the implementation of part XI of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea of 10 December 1982, and thereafter accede to that convention.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, we will vote for the resolution and, should it be adopted by the General Assembly, sign the agreement. We intend to ratify the agreement and accede to the United Nations law of the sea convention in due course and once the necessary procedures are complete. The Government's objections to part XI of the convention, which were explained to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) in 1984, have been satisfactorily addressed in the new agreement. The remainder of the convention is generally helpful to United Kingdom interests.

North-West Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about ethnic clashes involving large-scale deaths in the Turcana tribe in north-west Kenya; what role has been played in this by the Kenyan and Sudanese Governments; and what representations he has made.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no evidence of large scale deaths amongst the Turcana people in north-west Kenya caused by ethnic clashes.

Mozambique

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress being made in the confinement and disarmament of Government and RENAMO forces in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As of 12 July, 95 per cent. of all forces in Mozambique had been assembled. Forty-eight per cent. of the Government of Mozambique forces and 82 per

cent. of RENAMO forces had been demobilised. Demobilisation is scheduled to be completed by 15 August.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library reports received by the Department from the clearing house centre for information discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 18 July, *Official Report*, column *32*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many requests for information on third countries have been received from the clearing house centre for information discussion and exchange on the crossing of borders and immigration; and in respect of which countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

None.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Newton: The functions of the Privy Council Office do not include the provision of assistance to small businesses.

WALES

Nusery and Reception Classes

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* nursery schools and classes and *(b)* children under five in reception classes, in each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on expenditure on nursery and reception classes cannot be identified separately from data collected centrally.

Cancer Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will examine the paper by Rooney, Beral et al in the *British Medical Journal*, volume 307, pages 1391-97, on prostatic cancer causation, in so far as it applies to the population of Wales; and if he will make a statement on cancer studies undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Officials have examined the paper, which suggests a statistical association between the incidence of prostatic cancer and possible occupational exposure to certain radionuclides that tend to be associated with the working environment of heavy water reactors. Exposure to these radionuclides was found to be uncommon and did not affect the overall health of the Atomic Energy Authority work force. Members of the public are unlikely to be significantly exposed to these radionuclides, and so the findings of this study do not appear to be relevant to the population of Wales. If there are any implications of the study for the Welsh work force this would be a matter for the Health and Safety Executive.

Within the last six years two studies on cancer incidence in Wales have been published by the Welsh Office. These are:

"A report of an investigation into the incidence of Leukaemia in the North Wales coastal strip" by Emeritus Professor H. Campbell, FRCP; and

"Investigation of Incidence of Cancer around Wylfa and Trawsfynydd Nuclear Installations 1984 to 1986".

Copies of both reports are available in the Library of the House.

Floods Llandudno

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of financial and other assistance given by his office to assist *(a)* individuals, *(b)* the local authority and *(c)* other organisations following the flood in Llandudno in June 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Gwynedd county council and Aberconwy borough council are receiving financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme of some £4·5 million towards the cost of temporary rehousing, cleaning-up operations, repairs to local authority buildings and infrastructure, and the social services flood support team.

Housing grants and loans from the social fund were made available to those qualifying. The strategic development scheme will provide assistance for the flood support team during 1994-95 and 1995-96 and fund a post for three years under business in the community to encourage investment by the private sector in new and existing economic projects in the area.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make funds available to local authorities to appoint additional staff to inspect houses in multiple occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Inspection of houses in multiple occupation is a revenue service which is funded through the annual local authority revenue settlement. It is for councils to determine the priority they give to these inspections alongside their other duties when apportioning resources.

Rheumatologist, Gwynedd

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide funding to appoint a rheumatologist to serve Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is a matter for individual health authorities and NHS trusts to decide whether funding should be made available to develop a particular service in accordance with perceived local needs.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for ensuring that there is enough suitable accommodation for students studying in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Further and higher education institutions are independent, autonomous bodies responsible for deciding their own priorities, including admissions policies and any arrangements for the accommodation of their students.

University of Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of students at the constituent colleges of the University of Wales in 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the number of students at the University of Wales in 1994 is not yet available. The number of students at the constituent colleges of the University of Wales for the academic years 1970-71, 1980-81, 1990-91 and 1992-93, which is the latest available year, are shown in the table.

All Full-time and Part-time, Undergraduate and Postgraduate students at each of the constituent colleges of the University of Wales[1]

Colleges of the University of Wales	*1970-71*	*1980-81*	*1990-91*	*1992-93*
Aberystwyth	2,592	3,318	4,013	5,070
Bangor	2,515	3,149	3,819	5,015
Cardiff[2]	3,755	6,266	10,069	12,134
St. David's, Lampeter	354	810	1,012	1,332
Swansea	3,510	4,295	6,056	7,823
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology[2]	2,025	3,038	—	—
College of Medicine	423	791	1,201	1,738
Total	15,174	21,667	26,170	33,112

[1] As at December of each year.
[2] In 1988 the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology merged with the University of Wales College Cardiff.
Source: "Statistic of Education, Volume 6—Universities" and "University Statistics; Students and Staff" published by Universities' Sta tistical Record.

Cereals

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will explain how the notional yields of 3·32 tonnes per hectare for less-favoured area farmers and 5·17 tonnes per hectare for non less-favoured area farmers was calculated for the purposes of arable area payments in 1993-94;

(2) what historical information was available to his Department in calculating yields for the purpose of arable area payments for harvest year 1993-94; and what account was taken of it in calculating average yields;

(3) what were the wheat yields for each county in Wales in 1986 to 1992, sorted by seven-year average, according to the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service study received by his Department in January 1993;

(4) pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *38*, what was the average cereal yield for *(a)* farms wholly within the less-favoured area and *(b)* farms wholly outside the less-favoured area for the years from 1986 to 1992; and how those figures were calculated.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is his policy that a single cereals region would be best for Wales for purposes of arable area payments.

Mr. Redwood: I accept that an England and Wales region would be best for Welsh cereal farmers, but this is not a decision that I can make on my own. All four Agriculture Ministers have to agree on the regionalisation plan and take into account the interests of growers throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount to be paid to Welsh farmers in arable area payments for the harvest year 1993-94; and how much is to be paid on land *(a)* in the less-favoured area and *(b)* outside the less-favoured area.

Mr. Redwood: The information will not be available until all the 1994 arable aid applications have been processed.

Nurses

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a breakdown of the spending at his Department on nurse education and training for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94, identifying spending allocated to *(a)* pre-registration education, *(b)* post-registration education and *(c)* nurse teacher training and support.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Funding of post-registration education is not identifiable centrally.

	Nurse Education and Training £ millions	*Nurse Teacher Training 000's*
1990-91	31·8	504
1991-92	33·9	524
1992-93	28·5	433
1993-94	27·1	278

Notes:
1. The figures for 1990-91 to 1992-93 include Health Authority expenditure on student/pupil salaries and Welsh National Board revenue. The figures do not include overhead costs met by Health Authorities. The 1993-94 figure is the expenditure on nurse education under the Towards 2000 arrangements.
2. The figures for nurse teacher training relate to funding by Welsh National Board.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps he is taking to provide for the redeployment of nurse tutors in the South East Wales Institute of Nursing and Midwifery Education displaced as a consequence of the proposed reduction in nursing student numbers;

(2) what steps he is taking to provide for the retraining and redeployment of nurse teachers who are displaced as a result of the proposed reduction in the number of nursing students.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is under consideration.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total cost of the changes in nurse education since 1989 resulting from the introduction of Project 2000.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total cost to nurse education of the introduction in 1991 of Project 2000 is not seperately identifiable. Additional central funding of approximately £24 million was made to health authorities between 1991-92 and 1993-94. From 1994-95 onwards this additional funding is within the authorities' allocations and is not identified separately.

Council Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the latest available date for each district council area and for Wales as a whole *(a)* the number of households whose appeals against council tax bandings had not been resolved, *(b)* the total number of such appeals made, *(c)* the total number of households, *(d)* the proportion of *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)* and *(e)* the proportion of *(a)* as a percentage of *(c)*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The position on 30 June 1994 was as follows:

Billing authority	*(a) Households with outstanding banding proposals*	*(b) Total of proposals made*	*(c) Total of households*	*(d) (a) as percentage of (b)*	*(e) (a) as percentage of (c)*
Aberconwy	873	1,227	24,985	71·15	3·49
Alyn and Deeside	737	1,197	30,323	61·57	2·43
Arfon	728	998	24,257	72·95	3·00
Blaenau Gwent	306	679	32,466	45·07	0·94
Brecknock	975	2,122	18,402	45·95	5·30
Cardiff	2,398	3,942	120,783	60·83	1·99
Carmarthen	1,544	2,384	24,236	64·77	6·37
Ceredigion	2,285	3,837	30,247	59·55	7·55
Colwyn	749	1,312	25,487	57·09	2·94
Cynon Valley	514	932	27,914	55·15	1·84
Delyn	628	1,171	28,033	53·63	2·24
Dinefwr	1,243	2,025	17,157	61·38	7·24
Dwyfor	571	792	14,540	72·10	3·93
Glyndwr	746	1,229	18,571	60·70	4·02
Islwyn	400	705	26,846	56·74	1·49
Llanelli	637	1,126	32,350	56·57	1·97
Lliw Valley	578	968	26,849	59·71	2·15
Meirionnydd	452	1,040	17,909	43·46	2·52
Merthyr Tydfil	330	672	25,037	49·11	1·32
Monmouth	1,598	2,695	32,300	59·29	4·95
Montgomeryshire	685	1,749	23,754	39·17	2·88
Neath	468	945	27,545	49·52	1·70
Newport	413	1,318	55,602	31·34	0·74
Ogwr	1,097	1,623	54,757	67·59	2·00
Port Talbot	390	678	21,193	57·52	1·84
Preseli Pembs	1,566	2,605	31,020	60·12	5·05
Radnorshire	650	1,177	11,153	55·23	5·83
Rhondda	230	691	33,177	33·29	0·69
Rhuddlan	467	817	24,475	57·16	1·91
Rhymney Valley	514	979	41,449	52·50	1·24
South Pembs	859	1,635	19,876	52·54	4·32
Swansea	1,874	3,454	78,460	54·26	2·39
Taff-Ely	715	1,334	39,178	53·60	1·83
Torfaen	466	911	37,997	51·15	1·23
Vale of Glamorgan	1,314	1,912	47,202	68·72	2·78
Wrexham Maelor	974	1,913	48,020	50·91	2·03
Ynys Mon	1,069	1,787	31,378	59·82	3·41
Totals	32,043	56,581	1,224,928	56·63	2·62

School Meals

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for each year since 1987, what was the percentage of school pupils entitled to free school meals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The percentage of school pupils entitled to free school meals in Wales is shown in the following table. Data are not available prior to 1988-89.

As at September each year

Year	*Per cent.*
1988-89	18·5
1989-90	17·8
1990-91	18·4
1991-92	20·8
1992-93	22·8

Welsh Health Staff College

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made on the setting up of and resourcing of the Welsh Health Staff College; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The matter is still under consideration.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he expects the publication of the accounts for 1993-94 of the Welsh Development Agency; what special measures he proposes to make in the published accounts in relation to the independent legal advice received in relation to the ultra vires issue concerning Welsh Development Agency grant schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The accounts will be published today and will include a statement on legal powers and expenditure in relation to certain grants and loans.

Dentists

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *771*, regarding registered dentists, if he will make it his policy to collect information on what proportion of registered dentists offer a full national health service dental service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All dentists who are on the dental lists of family health services authorities are obliged, by their terms of service, to provide the full range of national health service treatment for patients registered with them under national health service arrangements.

General dental practitioners are independent contractors and are free to decide how much of their time to devote to national health service work. The situation may vary from week to week. It would not be cost-effective to collect information centrally in the format suggested. Family health authorities have responsibility for managing general dental services in their area and are best placed to advise on the provision of national health service dental services locally.

Hospitals (Information Systems)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the pilot scheme for information systems at Glan Clwyd hospital; and what is the number of hospitals not implementing hospital information support systems, and the cost thereof.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An evaluation will be completed this year and a summary of a report published in July 1993 was widely circulated throughout the NHS. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Glan Clwyd has the most developed system but all major hospitals have made significant investment and information on costs is therefore not available in the form requested.

Roads

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for a successor document to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s", published in 1989.

Mr. Redwood: I have today published "Roads in Wales: 1994 Review". This sets out details of progress in improving the trunk road network since 1989; and establishes clear and identifiable priorities and plans for future improvements to the trunk road network. I have arranged for a copy of the report to be sent to all Welsh Members of Parliament, and for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now able to dissolve the residuary Welsh Water Authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has today dissolved by order the residuary Welsh Water Authority.

Further Education

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conditions are attached to the disposal of Exchequer-funded land and buildings by institutions in the further and higher education sector.

Sir Wyn Richards: The conditions allow further and higher education institutions in Wales to retain the proceeds of sale of Exchequer-funded land and buildings, within specified limits agreed by the Secretary of State. These conditions are set out in the financial memoranda between the Welsh Office and the Welsh funding councils, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made to ensure that there is sufficient flow of water for fish to pass during and after the construction of the Cardiff Bay barrage.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Suitable measures have been agreed by the National Rivers Authority. I have arranged for details to be placed in the Library of the House and the Cardiff Bay development corporation has agreed to have copies of the information available on request.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Horbury Convent, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will investigate the circumstances of the recent sale of the former Horbury convent, Wakefield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have no status in this matter. They did not own the former Horbury convent, Wakefield, nor did they have any involvement with its sale.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bellamy's Restaurant

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee (1) if he will conduct a survey among hon. Members and their staff and officers and staff of the House to discover their views on the new arrangement for Bellamy's restaurant;

(2) how many representations he has received regarding the change of usage of parts of Bellamy's cafeteria; from whom these representations were received; and how many were in favour of the change.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The changes to Bellamy's were undertaken following vigorous representations from hon. Members. I have received numerous representations regarding the change of use. I understand that the Director of Catering Services intends to take account of these representations when she reviews the operation of Bellamy's clubroom after Christmas. The Catering Committee has asked to be kept informed of the results of that review and will consider appropriate consultations at that time.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee (1) who was consulted by the Catering Committee before the decision was taken to restrict access to Bellamy's cafeteria in 1 Parliament street;

(2) if he will make a statement to explain the criteria used to restrict usage of Bellamy's cafeteria.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The rules of access to Bellamy's cafeteria have been changed twice, on both occasions because of overcrowding. In endorsing the decisions of the Director of Catering Services, the Catering Committee sought to ensure that the necessary consultation had taken place. The main criterion of the Refreshment Department, and of the Catering Committee, is to ensure that users requiring main meals are served without undue delay and in reasonable comfort.

Cardiff-Wales Airport

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to meet freight forwarders at Cardiff-Wales airport to discuss future clearance arrangements for freight containers;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that a day-night, seven-days-a-week service for deliveries from the freight transit terminal is provided at Cardiff-Wales airport;

(3) if he will make it his policy to seek the opinions of *(a)* inward investing firms and *(b)* the Confederation of British Industry in Wales concerning proposed changes to container and other freight clearance arrangements at Cardiff-Wales airport;

(4) if he will make a statement on the use of Cardiff-Wales airport as an approved clearance point for sea freight containers;

(5) what recent assessment has been made by his Department of the impact of the proposed changes to freight clearance arrangements at Cardiff-Wales airport upon *(a)* future throughput of freight, *(b)* levels of inward investment into Wales in future and *(c)* freight-forwarding agents based at the airport.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

There are no plans for Ministers to meet freight forwarders at Cardiff-Wales airport. The head of the customs executive unit at Cardiff is responsible for approving freight clearance arrangements. It is customs policy to consult fully with trade interests.

Customs place no restrictions on the times of delivery of cleared cargo. This is a matter for the approved transit shed operator at Cardiff-Wales airport.

Approval for clearance of freight is a matter for customs in consultation with commercial interests. Since 1 July 1993, clearance of seafreight removed to Cardiff-Wales airport has ceased as examination facilities there are unsuitable for standard shipping containers.

Nationally, customs are consulting trade interests through a joint consultative committee and trade associations on proposals for change to arrangements for freight clearance. No decisions have been taken in respect of Cardiff-Wales airport.

Veal

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what was the country of origin and method of production of the veal served in House canteens in the week of 11 to 15 July.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: All veal used by the Refreshment Department is of British origin and is purchased only from suppliers who use the quantock method of rearing veal calves.

Banqueting Rooms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what new proposals he has to publish details of the organisations that use the banqueting rooms in the Palace of Westminster in the names of hon. Members.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: None.

Upper Waiting Hall (Exhibitions)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for the exhibition relating to "BTEC—A Decade of Achievement", to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 7 November to Friday 11 November.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to natural gas vehicles to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 5 December to Friday 9 December.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat: Secretaries of State for National Heritage have appointed three special advisers since the formation of the Department. The appointment of one of these is current.

Museums and Galleries Commission

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the Museums and Galleries Commission's administration of its role in the acceptance in lieu scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: Yes. There are several stages involved in considering offers of pre-eminent works of art and other heritage items, and I am satisfied that the Museums and Galleries Commission handles these effectively in dealing with individual offers. It is helpful that the Museums and Galleries Commission has asked a number of key figures in the art world to form an advisory panel. This panel's expertise in identifying those best qualified to comment on pre-eminence and valuation, and subsequently in assessing this advice, is proving effective. I am satisfied that these new procedures contribute positively to the operation of the scheme.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Use

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has as to the effect on traffic bunching on motorways of the use of the middle and outside lanes as cruising lanes rather than as overtaking lanes.

Mr. Key: Poor lane discipline on motorways causes delay and reduces vehicle throughput, particularly at high traffic flows.

Seat Belts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to publish the report into seat belt safety in respect of mini buses and coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 19 July, *Official Report*, columns *81-82*.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what role will be played by his Department in any forthcoming consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in transport provision.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The Department of Transport contributed to its preparation. I welcome the publication of this document and would encourage everyone interested in these issues, especially disabled people themselves, to respond with their views.

Mr Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with *(a)* manufacturers and suppliers and *(b)* representatives of the disabled regarding the design of taxi cabs in relation to access and safety for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has worked closely with manufacturers and suppliers of vehicles and equipment in the taxi industry and with representatives of people with disabilities over the past decade to develop features and facilities that will meet the needs of the wide range of elderly and disabled people who have mobility problems.

Driving Tests

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that driving tests should not be held during the hours of darkness in any part of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Ford, and I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. The agency's deputy chief executive, Mr. Lobo, will answer in Dr. Ford's absence on leave.

Letter from G. A. Lobo to Mr. Brian Wilson, dated 18 July 1994.

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to the question you have raised about holding driving tests during the hours of darkness. I am replying since Dr. Ford is on annual leave.

The Driving Standards Agency is considering whether it would be sensible to conduct fewer driving tests per day during the winter, when the daylight hours are shorter, subject to extra tests being added to the summer programme. This could have the advantage of switching staff resources to be more in line with the seasonal pattern of demand.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has regarding the percentage of drivers involved in accidents on motorways who have passed their driving test (i) less than three months previously, (ii) less than six months previously and (iii) less than 12 months previously.

Mr. Key: A recently completed research study of 29,500 learner and novice drivers revealed that, of the 7,079 drivers who answered questions on their accident experience 14—0·2 per cent. had had an accident on a motorway in the first three months; 23—0·32—in the first six months and 40—0·57 per cent. in the first year of driving. The accidents mainly involved damage to vehicles; only three were reported to have involved injury.

Traffic Speeds

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce national and local targets to be achieved for reducing speeds driven for traffic on different types of road, including urban roads.

Mr. Key: Our target is to reduce road casualties. Reducing vehicle speeds can make a major contribution to this and is a key element in our road safety strategy. However, it is only one of many road safety measures and the speed distribution on different roads varies so widely that there would be little benefit in establishing secondary targets for reducing speeds.

Consultants

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what part Sir Christopher Foster played in the Coopers and Lybrand bid for the consultancy contracts to establish a charging regime for track users during the time he acted as his special adviser.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *102*, what assessment he has now made of whether Sir Christopher Foster avoided any conflict of interest during his role as his special adviser.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that there was no conflict of interest.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether Sir Christopher Foster's advice to him on rail privatisation included advice on the track access charging regime during the period that Coopers and Lybrand was bidding for or undertaking consultancy contracts on the charging regime.

Mr. Freeman: Sir Christopher Foster provided advice on railway restructuring and privatisation generally. He played no part directly or indirectly in the letting or management of any consultancy contracts.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the achievements of Sir Christopher Foster as his special adviser on rail privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: Sir Christopher fulfilled his remit to provide my right hon. Friend with expert advice on rail privatisation matters.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the final sum paid to Coopers and Lybrand in connection with its work on advising about a track access charging system.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *724-27*.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the powers under which salary and expenses are paid to members of the Railtrack board; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: Remuneration and expenses are paid to members of the Railtrack board as company directors in accordance with articles 87 and 88 of the articles of association of Railtrack Group plc. Remuneration is determined by the company by shareholders' decisions in accordance with article 87 and, as the company is wholly owned by the Government, such decisions are given by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Transport. I am arranging for a copy of these articles to be placed in the Library.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards he will be implementing to ensure the long-term research functions of the Transport Research Laboratory when it is privatised.

Mr. Key: The privatisation of the Transport Research Laboratory will have full regard to the need to satisfy the Government's continuing requirement for research, whether long-term or otherwise.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what stage his Department has reached in privatising the Transport Research Laboratory; and when he expects this process to be completed.

Mr. Key: My Department has recently appointed Price Waterhouse as financial advisers on the privatisation of the Transport Research Laboratory, which we hope can be achieved during 1995-96. We expect to appoint legal advisers shortly to assist with the sale of TRL.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contacts his Department has had with possible bidders for the Transport Research Laboratory.

Mr. Key: Various bodies have approached the Department in confidence to express an interest in bidding for the Transport Research Laboratory.

European Passenger Services

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it a condition of the transfer of European Passenger Services to the private sector that the channel tunnel link will be built.

Mr. Freeman: It will be a condition of the development agreement with the consortium selected to construct the Link that EPS will be returned to Government ownership if the link is not completed.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who will be responsible for the outstanding debt on trains built for European Passenger Services after they have been transferred to private ownership.

Mr. Freeman: It is intended to transfer European Passenger services to the private sector free of debt as part of the Government's contribution to the project to construct the new channel tunnel rail link. Any liabilities that arise after privatisation and particularly payments on trains that have been leased will be the responsibility of the new owner.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the means by which the Exchequer's interest in connection with the proposed privatisation of European Passenger Services can be safeguarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government intend to transfer European Passenger Services to the winner of the competition to select the consortium to construct the new channel tunnel rail link and expect to receive full value for the company in the bids of those tendering for the project.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the Vehicle Inspectorate intends to enter into negotiations with trade unions regarding their 1994 pay claim;

(2) if he will list for each of the last five years the number of substantive traffic examiners employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate;

(3) if he will list for each of the last five years the number of substantive vehicle examiners employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Mr. Key: These are operational matters for the Vehicle Inspectorate. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 18 July 1994:

VEHICLE INSPECTORATE: PAY BARGAINING AND STAFFING

1. The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about staffing and pay bargaining at the Vehicle Inspectorate (VI).

2. On the matter of pay bargaining VI management intends entering into negotiations with the trade unions within the next two weeks.

3. In answer to your questions on vehicle and traffic examiners, the figures below give a breakdown, by grade, of the number of staff in post over the past 5 years. Until recently our figures did not draw a distinction between substantive staff and those on temporary promotion. For the sake of consistency the figures for 1994 do not make this distinction either.

i. *Vehicle Examiners*

Grade	*30 November 1990*	*31 May 1991*	*31 July 1992*	*31 July 1993*	*16 June 1994*
SPTO	42	41	39	38	36
HPTO	104	108	103	100	82
PTO	470	461	465	432	409
AVE	49	65	89	89	83
Total	665	675	696	659	610

ii. *Traffic Examiners*

Grade	*30 November 1990*	*18 July 1991*	*31 July 1992*	*31 July 1993*	*16 June 1994*
Enforcement Coordinator	10	8	7	7	5
Supervising Traffic Examiner	1	1	0	0	0
Senior Traffic Examiner	43	32	32	31	25
Traffic Examiner	162	163	174	167	168
Total	216	204	213	205	198

4. If you have any further questions about the Inspectorate please contact me.

Coastguard Agency

Mr. David Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about efficiency gains in the Coastguard Agency.

Mr. Norris: The chief executive of the Coastguard Agency has put forward a series of efficiency measures in response to the challenging target I set the Department. I have accepted his proposals which will lead to efficiency savings of nearly £1·5 million being achieved over the next two years. The measures will include rationalising the administrative services of the agency's Southampton headquarters and introducing more flexible manning arrangments at rescue centres. They will not involve the closure of any rescue centres; the agency's coastal response capability will be maintained. These measures are consistent with those set out in agency's current business and corporate plans. They will lead to greater value for money from the Coastguard Agency without compromising safety at sea and along the shoreline.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what alternative means he has considered of reducing losses of vehicle excise duty caused by evasion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The vehicle record maintained by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency plays a key role in the fight against crime. It identifies vehicle excise duty—VED—evaders and thus helps in the fight against vehicle and traffic offences but is also an important source of data for the police in tackling serious crimes. Defects in the record are, however, hindering these efforts, and give rise to significant shortfalls in VED revenue. I intend, therefore, to introduce changes that will tackle the theft of vehicles in particular as well as crime more generally. These changes will be directed against crime and against dishonest car owners and not law-abiding motorists.

Evasion of vehicle excise duty amounts to £145 million a year. It costs the taxpayer a further £25 million in enforcement costs in my own Department, and in addition there are costs to the police and the courts in tracking down and prosecuting evaders. We continue to make improvements in the numbers of evaders brought to book but although the level of evasion seems to have been contained, we have been unable actually to reduce it.

A major factor that frustrates our endeavours is that vehicles without a tax disc in the windscreen cannot be

tracked to their owners if they have not notified DVLA that they have acquired the vehicle. This is because, under the present procedures, a person who parts with a car is obliged to notify DVLA—but many do not; and the person who acquires it is also obliged to notify DVLA that he is now the keeper, and although most do, they often wait until the tax expires, which may be up to a year later.

I am therefore proposing some fundamental changes to the present registration procedures to require those who part with a vehicle to notify DVLA, at the same time and on the same form, as those who acquire it. This would mean that the vehicle record could be brought up to date immediately. It would also allow us to replace existing vehicle registration documents with log books containing a number of improvements, in particular the inclusion of features such as a list of previous keepers and a record of mileage which I know motorists are keen to have, along with new security features.

While a more accurate vehicle record would have many benefits, it could not eliminate VED evasion completely. This is because there are other ways in which VED can be evaded which are not picked up in the records. Because the present system allows for breaks in licensing when the keeper claims the vehicle is not in use, evasion of VED for short periods is difficult to detect. I therefore propose to introduce a system of continuous licensing based on possession, rather than use, for all cars and motorcycles.

Naturally there are many details to be settled and the needs and wishes of those that will be affected must be taken into account. I will be issuing a consultation document shortly.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The figures are:

	Number
(a) 1992	2
1993	0
1994 to date	1
(b) 1992	0
1993	1
1994 to date	0

My Department did not exist in any comparable form before 1992. Figures for earlier years are therefore not available.

Civil Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the Government's proposals for the future of the civil service are compatible with their commitment as announced at the TUC conference on full employment on 5 July to policies in support of reducing the current high levels of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend made it clear in his speech at the TUC conference that increasing employment depends on our competitiveness as a nation. That requires an efficient and effective public sector. The Government's proposals on the future of the civil service, set out in the White Paper published last week, Cm 2627, provide the framework for a further improvement in the performance of the civil service.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how his statement on 13 July concerning the future of the civil service will affect the completion and occupation of the new Inland Revenue offices in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Dr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total number of scientists employed by the Agriculture and Food Research Council *(a)* for 1979 and *(b)* at present.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of scientists employed by the Agricultural and Food Research Council in 1979 was 3,417. As at 31 March 1994, the number was 2,025.

Institute of Food Research

Dr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many scientists were employed at the Institute of Food Research for each year since 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of scientists employed at the Institute of Food Research since 1986 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1986	534
1987	514
1988	517
1989	463
1990	425
1991	308
1992	338
1993	335
1994	303

Benevolent Fund

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement regarding the trustees of the Duchy of Lancaster benevolent fund.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy benevolent fund has been operating as a registered charity for the past nine months. As Chancellor of the Duchy I appoint the trustees of the fund. Because of this I have felt that I should not be a

trustee. I will continue to appoint trustees and have invited the Lords Lieutenant of Greater Manchester and Merseyside to become trustees of the fund.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of extending family credit to *(a)* childless couples and *(b)* single persons assuming the present rules otherwise remain the same; and how many additional recipients there would be in each case.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost of extending family credit to childless couples is £65 million with 70,000 additional recipients. The cost for single people is £1·5 billion with 1·5 million additional recipients.

Note: Estimates are drawn from the 1989,90 and 91 family expenditure surveys and uprated to 1994-95 prices and benefit levels. The basis of the award is assumed to be the existing adult credit rate, without child credits, to people of 18 years of age and over. Estimates of the two costs are rounded to the nearest £5 million and £100 million respectively, and numbers of gainers are rounded to the nearest 10,000 and 100,000 respectively. These estimates do not include the financial effects of any behavioural response.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what sums were distributed in family credit and income support in the 12 months immediately *(a)* preceding and *(b)* following the abolition of the wages councils.

Mr. Burt: Levels of expenditure on family credit and income support are affected by a large number of factors.

Information is available only for financial years. Figures for the last two years are as follows:

	Income support £M	*Family credit* £M
1992-93	14,790	929
1993-94 (estimated)	15,773	1,091

Note: Figures from Departmental Report March 1994

Benefit Claims (Time Limits)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce a maximum period for claiming benefits in areas outside the area of residence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have no such plans. Every effort is made to ensure that benefit is paid only where the conditions of entitlement are satisfied. In particular, benefits for unemployed people are paid only to those who are available for, and actively seeking, work. Housing benefit is paid only to people who have a genuine rent liability on their home. The Government are not persuaded that it is desirable or practicable to time-limit benefit entitlement of people living outside their normal area of residence as the free movement of people is essential for the efficient operation of the labour market.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Hague: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of Business Links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

Measures introduced by the Department specifically to assist small businesses include:

The Department has increased, from April 1994, the qualifying threshold for small employers' relief for statutory sick pay from £16,000 to £20,000.

From April 1994, the Department improved and simplified the procedures for self-employed people claiming family credit, by including a new form in the claim pack on which self-employed people can provide earnings details straight away and by extending the fast-track service to the newly self-employed.

Reductions in employers' national insurance contributions from April 1994 were substantially greater for lower-paid employees—earning under £200 a week. This is likely to help small businesses.

From April 1994 changes have been made to the national insurance treatment of people, such as sub-postmasters, who have a salary from a main occupation as well as income from a subsidiary business. Where the income from the small business is low, they may now claim exception from self-employed national insurance even though, for income tax purposes, they chose to have all their earnings taxed together. Previously such people were liable for contributions as both employed and self-employed persons.

Other measures aimed at business in general, which should help small businesses, include:

Administration of the Statutory Sick Pay scheme will be simplified by abolition of the lower rate of SSP from April 1995.

The three tests for entitlement to statutory maternity pay have been replaced by a single test for women expecting a baby on or after 16 October 1994.

The Contributions Agency has completed the redesigning of all forms it sends out to businesses, with the aim of making them simpler to understand.

The Department has a system to monitor proposals which have an impact on small business, to ensure that the needs and costs to small businesses are taken into account, but there are no performance indicators specifically for monitoring achievements in this area. However, we attach particular importance to action taken to help small businesses and will continue to explore further ways of doing so.

Child Support Agency

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what figure has been agreed with Andersen Consulting for it to conduct a review into the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) by the chief executive of the Child Support Agency on 18 July 1994.

Information Technology Services Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employees of the Information Technology Services Agency there were *(a)* at its formation and *(b)* at the latest available date at each separate location and in total; and in how many cases staff have (i) been transferred to outsource contractors, (ii) accepted early retirement or (iii) accepted redundancy.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table. As at 18 July 1994 no staff have been transferred to outsource contractors, 130 have accepted voluntary early retirement/severance and there have been no redundancies.

Location	*Number of staff*	
	1990 (launch of ITSA)	*1994 (as at 18 July 1994)*
Livingston	206	210
Longbenton	1,147	1,120
Washington	293	782
North West[1]	1,438	2,294
Swindon	[2]0	6
Reading	196	100
London	62	96
Sheffield	0	141
Leeds	0	17
Total	3,342	4,766

[1] North West includes Lytham and the surrounding area.
[2] Swindon operational from late November 1990.

Child Care Disregard

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns *227-32*, if he will now include figures showing for April and October the effects of the new child care disregard for a lone mother with two children aged four and six years working part time for 24 hours earning £80 a week.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table. The child care disregard will be introduced in October and will apply to the calculation of housing benefit, council tax benefit and disability working allowance as well as family credit. Up to £40 of child care costs for children under 11 will be disregarded against earnings, provided that care is arranged with a registered childminder or nursery.

It should be noted that the child care costs, specified in accordance with the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 6 July at column *227-32*, are significantly higher than those typically encountered at the level of earnings specified. Recent research[1] shows that the average weekly child care costs of working lone parents are £24·60 per week.

[1] "Families, work, and Benefit" (Policy Studies Institute, June 1993).

Lone Mother with 2 children aged 4 and 6 working part-time for 24 hours earning £80 per week with child care costs of £40 Child Care allowance = £40

	Position at April 1994 £	*Position at October 1994* £
Gross earnings	80·00	80·00
Tax	0·00	0·00
National Insurance	3·44	3·44
Take home pay	76·56	76·56
Family credit	63·30	66·70
Child benefit	24·60	24·60
Rent	36·42	36·42
Rent rebate	9·67	33·46
Council tax	8·30	8·30
Council tax benefit	0·07	7·39
Child care costs	40·00	40·00
Total net income	174·20	208·71
Net income after rent and council tax	129·48	163·99
Net income after rent, Council tax and child care costs	89·48	123·99

Notes:
1. The family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to their size and pay estimated average rent and council tax.
2. The family is assumed to have no capital and take up entitlement to One Parent Benefit and all income-related benefits.

Pension Law Review Committee

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Government will respond to the fourth report of the Social Security Select Committee on the report of the Pension Law Review Committee.

Mr. Hague: The Government's response to the Select Committee's report is published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. We welcome the Committee's examination and recommendations on the Pension Law Review Committee report. We share its aim of safeguarding pension funds by effective regulation.

The Government have outlined their proposals for pension reform in the recent White Paper, "Security, Equality, Choice: The Future for Pensions", Cm. 2594-I and Cm. 2594-II. In it we propose a range of practical solutions to assist pension provision and improve scheme security.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will make available the annual reports and accounts for each of his next steps agencies, and the revised framework document for the Information Technology Services Agency.

Mr. Lilley: The annual report for the Child Support Agency was published on 4 July. The accounts will be published in October.

The 1993-94 annual reports and accounts for the other four executive agencies operating last year will be made available as follows: today for the Benefits Agency, Information Technology Services Agency and Resettlement Agency and tomorrow for the Contributions Agency. Copies of each report will be placed in the Library.

The revised framework document for the Information Technology Services Agency for 1994-95 will also be published today and a copy placed in the Library.

Benefits Agency

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to conduct a review of the Benefits Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Under the terms of the original Benefits Agency framework document, provision was made for the review of the framework document by the Secretary of State. The status and organisation of all the next steps agencies are required to be periodically reviewed to establish whether further improvements in customer service and value for money can be made. I am accordingly authorising a review of the functions of the Benefits Agency to establish what future way of organising it will best support the cost-effective delivery of the social security benefits; serve the needs of those who use the benefits system; and improve value for money and security, in terms of both improved accuracy and fraud.

The review will cover the evaluation of the agency's performance; the reconsideration of the way in which its functions are organised; and the revision of the framework document as appropriate. The current organisational structure has worked well over the past three years and there have been significant improvements in performance and value for taxpayers' money since agency status was achieved. Our aim is to build on this success.

We shall be consulting customer representative groups to establish their views on the kind of service delivery they would like in the future. We shall also be asking business interests whether there is potential for private sector involvement in the Benefits Agency's work.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the Benefits Agency and its work will be welcome by 28 October 1994. Anyone who would like to comment is asked, in the first instance, to contact:

Garvin Bowen
Department of Social Security
Euston Tower
286 Euston Road
London
NW1 3DN

I expect to announce my decisions on the review early next year.

Carers, Scotland

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of carers receive the carers' invalidity benefit in *(a)* the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole;

(2) how many carers *(a)* receive and *(b)* do not receive the invalid care allowance in (i) the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hague: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is as follows:

1994—none
1993—one special adviser joined the Department and one left
1992—one special adviser joined and one left
1991—none
1990—one special adviser joined.

Prisoners (Housing Benefit)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will follow up a letter to the hon. Member for South Hams, dated 24 June, regarding the review of the current rules for paying housing benefit to prisoners, and the effect of this policy on Mr. and Mrs. Shelston of Wembury, near Plymouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We are currently looking at the issues involving the payment of housing benefit to certain prisoners. A statement will be made when these inquiries are completed.

Severe Hardship Payments

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *148-49*, what amount was paid for severe hardship in each quarter since September 1988.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The amount of income support paid to 16 to 17-year-olds claiming income support under the severe hardship provision is determined locally.

Child Poverty

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children were living in poverty, as defined by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the World Health Organisation, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Burt: No Government in the United Kingdom have ever accepted that it is possible to identify a single simple measure to define poverty in any meaningful way.

Statistics on the distribution of household incomes, including those for children, can be found in "Households Below Average Income" 1979 to 1991-92, published on 14 July 1994, a copy of which is in the Library.

War Pensions

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many public surgeries were held by the war pensions welfare service in Shetland since 1985.

Mr. Hague: This is a matter for Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the War Pensions Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Peter Mathison to Mr. Jim Wallace, dated 19 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of War Pensions surgeries held in Shetland.

No War Pensions surgeries have been held in Shetland since 1985. The local Benefits Agency office in Lerwick are aware of the War Pensions Welfare Service and contact is on a regular basis, discussing any matters which may arise in connection with either existing or potential War Pensioners or Widows. The Lerwick office is regularly supplied with War Pensions publicity material including posters, claim forms and the War Pensions Welfare Officer's calling cards. In addition, the Welfare Office for the Highlands and Islands has visited Shetland yearly since 1984 and all those on the island who required or asked for assistance were contacted. The next visit is scheduled for August 1994. A member of the local War Pensions Committee, who also works for the Social Services Department on the island, is resident in Shetland and visits pensioners or widows when required.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Housing Benefit

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 the number of claimants of rent rebate and rent allowance, divided into fair-rented and non-fair-rented housing association tenants and fair-rented and non-fair-rented private sector tenants; if, following the Treasury's Summer Economic Forecast 1994, he will publish projections for each of the years from 1994-95 to 1996-97; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The available information is in the table. The projections for 1994-95 to 1996-97 will be announced at the time of the Budget and will be published in due course in the departmental report.

Number of housing benefit recipients in Great Britain 1988-1993 (000s)

			All private tenants	
			Other private tenants (Excluding Housing Associations)	
	Local Authority	All private tenants	Housing Associations	Regulated	Deregulated
1988	3,132	69	n/a	n/a	n/a
1989	2,971	958	n/a	n/a	n/a
1990	2,928	1,067	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991	2,945	1,085	n/a	n/a	n/a
1992	3,038	1,290	345	378	567
1993	3,053	1,477	412	339	726

n/a=Not available.

Source: Housing Benefit Management Information System quarterly caseload count in May of each year.

Note:

Information on Fair Rent is not collected. Data on Housing Association, regulated and deregulated rents is only available from May 1992.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 the mean and median rents paid by recipients of housing benefit according to whether they live in local authority, housing association or private sector accommodation, dividing the latter two groups into fair-rented and non-fair-rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The available information is in the table.

Mean and Median Rents (£/week) in Housing Benefit cases in Great Britain

	Local authority		All private tenants		Housing associations		All private tenants: Other private tenants (excluding housing associations)			
							Regulated		Deregulated	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
1988	18·96	18·23	21·80	20·15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1989	20·57	20·03	24·29	22·50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1990	23·67	22·59	29·42	25·98	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991	27·29	25·45	35·75	30·50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1992	30·48	28·29	41·68	35·50	35·53	32·91	34·20	30·50	50·93	43·20

n/a = Not available.

Source: Housing Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample of HB cases in May.

Note: Information on Fair Rent is not collected. Data on Housing Association, regulated and dregulated rents only available from May 1992.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for each year since 1988-89 how many claimants of *(a)* rent rebate and *(b)* rent allowance, divided between those claimants who are housing association tenants and those who are private sector tenants, were unemployed and how many were working but had earnings low enough to qualify for housing benefit; what proportion of total spending on each of these benefits is accounted for by unemployed claimants and those claimants who are working but have earnings low enough to qualify for housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table.

	1990		1991		1992	
	Unemployed	*Working*	*Unemployed*	*Working*	*Unemployed*	*Working*
Rent Rebate	35,000	137,000	67,000	145,000	77,000	147,000
Housing Association	—	—	—	—	11,000	14,000
Private	—	—	—	—	64,000	65,000
Total Rent Allowance	20,000	67,000	54,000	69,000	75,000	79,000

Data source:
The Housing Benefit Management Information system annual one per cent. enquiries of May for each year.
Notes:
1. No information on the proportion of total expenditure is available.
2. Information for May 1988 and May 1989 is not available.
3. The figures have been rounded to the nearest one thousand.
4. The information relates to benefit units, a benefit unit may be a couple or a single person.
5. Unemployed has been defined as in receipt of Unemployment Benefit.
6. Claimants in receipt of Income Support and earnings have been excluded, therefore, the information includes Housing Benefit-only cases where either a claimant and/or partner receives earnings.
7. Information on Housing Association tenants was not collected before 1992.

Disabled People

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names and addresses of those to be consulted on the Government's proposals to tackle discrimination against disabled people.

Mr. Scott: It is the Government's intention that this should be a wide-ranging public consultation. A copy of the names and addresses of the organisations on the initial consultation list will be placed in the Library and sent to the hon. Member shortly. The consultation document has also been sent to a number of individuals. In addition, advertising is to be placed in the national press to encourage other organisations and individuals with an interest to obtain a copy.

TREASURY

Rates and Taxes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), of 7 July, *Official Report*, columns *268-70*, if he will publish a table on a similar basis, showing the share of tax accounted for by rates, community charge and council tax as a separate item and distinguishing between taxes on income and taxes on capital.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested, set out in terms of the national accounts classification of taxes, is shown in the table.

Taxes as percentage of total taxes and social security contributions

	1978-79	*1991-92*	*[1]1993-94*	*[2]1994-95*	*[2]1995-96*
Rates[3]	10	—	—	—	—
Community charge/Council tax[4]	—	3	4	4	3
Business rates[5]	—	7	6	5	6
Expenditure taxes	31	35	37	37	37
Taxes on income	40	36	34	35	36
Taxes on capital	2	2	1	1	1
Social Security receipts	17	17	18	18	17

[1] Provisional outturn.
[2] From Treasury Summer Economic Forecast 1994.
[3] Includes domestic and non-domestic rates prior to introduction of community charge/council tax and business rates.
[4] Community charge for 1991-92; council tax from 1993-94. Includes some community charge arrears.
[5] Includes district council rates in Northern Ireland.

Developing Countries (Debt)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what commitments were made at the Naples economic summit of 8 to 10 July on raising the level of debt relief for developing countries facing special difficulties beyond 50 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 11 July 1994, *Official Report*, col. *667-69*.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *379*, what part of the total outstanding debt owed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the Overseas Development Administration by developing countries is derived from defence-related contracts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None of the outstanding debt owed to the Overseas Development Administration by developing countries relates to defence-related contracts. I regret that the information requested for the Exports Credits Guarantee Department is not readily available and could be collected only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what commitments were made by the Government of Japan at the Naples economic summit of 8 to 10 July to achieve the full implementation of the Trinidad terms for indebted developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Japan and our other G7 colleagues signed the summit communiqué encouraging

the Paris Club to offer additional concessions on debt relief for the poorest and most indebted countries facing special difficulties.

Pension Contributions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate total contributions to pensions by *(a)* employers, *(b)* self-employed and *(c)* employees; and if he will express *(a)* and *(c)* as a proportion of total earnings by employees.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The total contributions to pensions in 1992 were as follows:

£ billion

	Pension Schemes		*Life Assurance Individual premiums for life policies*
	State[1]	*Other*	
(a) by employers	19·5	19·4	—
(b) by self employed	1·0	n/a[2]	31·9
(c) by employees	13·2	9·8	—

[1] The National Insurance Fund plus the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS). National Insurance Fund contributions support payment by the fund of benefits other than pensions: there are no figures for contributions relating to pensions alone. However, a breakdown of benefits paid from the fund is given in Table 7·5 of the CSO United Kingdom National Accounts Blue Book, a copy of which is available in the Library.
[2] Not applicable.

Total earnings in 1992 were £341·0 billion: employers contributions to pensions represented 11·4 per cent. of this.

It is not possible to split life assurance figure between self-employed and employee contributions. Therefore, the employees' contributions proportion has not been estimated.

Inland Revenue, Dewsbury

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what attempts have been made to extend the lease on the offices used by the Inland Revenue in Dewsbury;

(2) what is the estimated cost of the move of the Dewsbury tax district office from Dewsbury to Leeds;

(3) what is the estimated annual cost of running the Dewsbury tax district office from Leeds.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Further detailed work is required before final estimated figures are reached and before there can be any decision about whether the Dewsbury proposal will go ahead and it will be some months before an announcement can be made.

Water Charges

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library tables showing estimates of the share of household income taken up by water charges, by region and quintile of income, on the income scale for 1988 and 1993.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A table showing estimates for England and Wales in 1988, based on the 1988 family expenditure survey, will be placed in the Library. Details of water and sewerage expenditure for households in Northern Ireland and Scotland are not available from the 1988 FES. Data for 1993 are not available until 5 August 1994.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *14*, concerning the exchange rate and competitiveness, if he will publish a table showing the periods since 1970 when falls in the nominal exchange rate have been greater than that required to compensate for an increase in the general level of prices; and what evidence he has that such falls in the real exchange rate have been inflationary.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Tables showing sterling's exchange rate index and United Kingdom inflation can be found in "Financial Statistics" and "Economic Trends" respectively, published by the Central Statistical Office. Historical data can be found in table 5.1 of the annual supplement to "Economic Trends". Together these data can be used to calculate the information requested. The exchange rate is one of the indicators that is monitored in reviewing monetary conditions, but it is only one of a wide range of factors influencing inflation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *14*, concerning the exchange rate and competitiveness, what evidence he has that the continued devaluation of the Italian lira has raised the rate of inflation; and if he will publish a table showing for the pound and the Italian lira the fall since August 1992 in the nominal and real exchange rates against the Deutschmark, the ecu and the United States dollar.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The exchange rate is only one of a wide range of factors influencing inflation. Monthly average exchange rates and inflation indices for the currencies requested can be found in "Financial Statistics" published by the Central Statistical Office and "Main Economic Indicators" published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development respectively. Together these data can be used to calculate the information requested.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage increase for the United Kingdom and each EC country in imports and exports to non-EEC countries in terms of value in dollar terms for September 1992 to the latest available date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The trade data are set out in the EUROSTAT publication "Eurostatistics, Data for short-term economic analysis", published monthly.

Money Circulation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current velocity of circulation of money relative to that in 1978; and if he will publish a table showing the annual change in velocity of circulation since 1978 together with the change in (i) gross domestic product, (ii) manufacturing output, (iii) employment and (iv) unemployment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Between the fourth quarter of 1978 and the first quarter of 1994 the velocity of circulation of M0 increased by 75 per cent., while the velocity of circulation of M4 has decreased by 43 per cent. The annual changes of these velocities are published in "Financial Statistics", table 3.1B. The table sets out the publication details for the other statistics:

Statistic	*Source*
Gross domestic product	Economic Trends (June 1994) Table 2.1 and Economic Trends Annual Supplement (1994) Table 1.1
Manufacturing output	Economic Trends (June 1994) Table 1.1 and Economic Trends Annual Supplement (1994) Table 4.1
Employment/unemployment	Economic Trends (June 1994) Table 4.2 and Economic Trends Annual Supplement (1994) Table 3.2

Central Statistical Office

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the Central Statistical Office performed against its key targets for 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Central Statistical Office's performance against its key targets for 1993-94 is described in the agency's annual report and accounts which are being laid before the House and published today. The CSO achieved 27 out of the 33 targets set for the year, including 17 out of 19 targets relating to the quality of key economic statistics.

Central Statistical Office's targets have been progressively tightened during recent years in recognition of improvements in performance. There has been a further tightening of a number of targets for 1994-95. These are set out in the "CSO Programme Strategies 1994-95 to 1996-97", which was released on 19 April.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the oral statement by the Paymaster General of 19 May, *Official Report*, column 1002, what conclusions he has reached regarding the VAT liability for the teaching of English as a foreign language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the light of the debate and the representations received I have decided that the order as drafted creates an unacceptable distortion in this sector of education and that VAT exemption should be available for all tuition in English as a foreign language. This expanded relief will be available from 1 August, the date the order comes into force, and will be administered by customs as a concession until such time as an amending order can be brought before the House.

Ships (Capital Allowances)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made to publish the draft legislation on capital allowance balancing charges for ships announced on 21 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Inland Revenue is making available today the draft clauses which will implement the proposals on capital allowances for ships which I announced on 21 April 1994. These will allow balancing charges arising on the disposal of a ship to be rolled over for a period of up to three years from the date on which it is disposed of. The charge will be set against subsequent expenditure on ships within that period.

Broadly speaking, the measure will apply to ships, including fishing vessels, disposed of on or after 21 April 1994 which are of a seagoing kind of 100 gross registered tonnes or more, but excluding those of a kind used for sport or recreational purposes. Ships brought into use by a shipowner on or after today will come within the scope of the measure where, for the first three years of use, they are registered in either the United Kingdom, its dependent territories or Crown dependencies, or another state within the European Union or European Economic Area. No registration requirement will apply to ships which the owners have used prior to today.

Further details of the proposed measure are included in a press release issued by the Inland Revenue today. A copy of this together with the draft clauses will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons. Subject to the outcome of discussions with the European Commission we intend to introduce these clauses in next year's Finance Bill.

Royal Family (Taxation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 12 July at column *565*, what are the titles of *(a)* the nine categories of deductible expenses in paragraph 4 and *(b)* the four categories of expenses under appendix B in the memorandum of understanding on royal taxation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There are no titles to the categories of deductible expenditure, but the categories were themselves published in the report of the Royal Trustees of 5 February 1993, House of Commons paper 464, which included the whole of the memorandum of understanding on royal taxation.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(3) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The table shows the number of special advisers who have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left my Department in each of the last five years:

	(a) joined	*(b) left*
1989	1	0
1990	0	2
1991	1	0
1992	1	2
1993	3	3
1994	0	0

Special advisers are not required to provide details of their employers on leaving Government service.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Murders

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been murdered by members of their immediate family in each of the last five years in respect of whom a conviction has been obtained within a court.

Mr. Maclean: The table shows the number of offences recorded as homicide, as at 27 August 1993, where the victims were persons under the age of 16 years and the suspect was the parent or other relative and was convicted of homicide:

	Number
1988	62
1989	40
1990	38
1991	42
1992	22

Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Young Offenders

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the options available to the courts for those under 21 years who are convicted of *(a)* theft from shops, *(b)* theft of a motor vehicle, *(c)* theft from a motor vehicle, *(d)* burglary of a dwelling house, *(e)* burglary of buildings other than dwelling houses, *(f)* assault and *(g)* criminal damage.

Mr. Maclean: The following sentencing options are currently available to the courts when a young person is convicted of the following offences—theft; taking a motor vehicle without authority; burglary from a dwelling place, burglary other than from a dwelling place; common assault; criminal damage:

Where the young person is aged 10 and under 18 years
- Absolute or conditional discharge
- Fine
- Compensation Order
- Bind over of parent
- Supervision Order
- Attendance Centre Order
- Community Service Order (from age 16)
- Probation Order (from age 16)
- Combination Order (from age 16)
- Detention in a young offender institution (from age 15)

Additionally, in respect of the offence of burglary from a dwelling place, a sentence of long-term detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act is available from age 14.

Where the young person is aged 18 and under 21 years
- Absolute or conditional discharge
- Fine
- Bind over of parent
- Compensation Order
- Probation Order
- Attendance Centre Order
- Community Service Order
- Combination Order (from age 16)
- Detention in a young offender institution.

National Lottery

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the members of the National Lottery Charity Board will be appointed; what qualifications will be taken into account in making appointments; when the board will first meet; who will be its chief executive; what will be its budget; when it will begin dispensing of lottery funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to announce the members of the National Lottery Charities Board within the next few days. The qualities taken into account include managerial skills, experience of grant administration and an understanding of the concerns for the voluntary sector across the United Kingdom. The object is to ensure that a wide range of expertise is available to the board.

It will be for the board, once established, to arrange its meeting, appoint its staff, and decide when to start making grants. Subject to the policy and financial directions which my right hon. and learned Friend will be issuing, the board will also set its own budget for making grants and meeting its administrative expenses.

Street Patrols

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to require security firms to become approved or registered before appointment to private street patrols;

(2) what plans he has to investigate the incidence and operation of private street patrols;

(3) what plans he has to draft a national code of practice for security firms involved in private street patrols.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no such plans.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for (1) entry clearance and (2) leave to remain as working holidaymakers have been *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused to citizens of (i) India, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Pakistan, (iv) Australia, (v) Canada, (vi) Ghana, (vii) Nigeria and (viii) Malaysia during 1993 and 1994 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained under Immigration Act powers (1) overnight, (2) between one night and one month and (3) for a period of more than one month in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre, *(b)* the Queen's building, Heathrow, *(c)* terminal 4, Heathrow, *(d)* the Beehive, Gatwick, *(e)* Haslar holding centre, *(f)* Her Majesty's prison Pentonville, *(g)* Campsfield house detention centre and *(h)* other establishments, by name, during (1) 1993 and (2) 1994 to the latest convenient date; and how many of these people in each category were (i) women, (ii) children under 18 years and (iii) men.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is given in the table. The other information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons detained overnight or longer at certain locations[1]

Location, length of stay, type of detainee	*1993*	*1994*[4]
Harmondsworth[2]	345	206
Queen's Building, Heathrow	1,321	438
Haslar	432	252
Terminal 4, Heathrow[3]:		
Overnight:		
Men	688	—

Location, length of stay, type of detainee	1993	1994[4]
Women	515	—
Children under 18 years	16	—
	1,219	—
More than one night, less than one month:		
Men	7	—
Women	21	—
Children under 18 years	—	—
	28	—
One month or more	—	—
The Beehive, Gatwick:		
Ovenight:		
Men	1,279	366
Women	335	47
Children under 18 years	25	4
	1,639	417
More than one night, less than one month:		
Men	1,344	1,019
Women	435	318
Children under 18 years	33	32
	1,812	1,369
One month or more	—	—
Campsfield House, Kidlington		
Overnight:		
Men	26	11
Women	3	5
Children under 18 years	1	—
	30	16
More than one night, less than one month:		
Men	95	175
Women	15	39
Children under 18 years	3	2
	113	216
One month or more:		
Men	64	262
Women	16	56
Children under 18 years	1	1
	81	319
Stansted:		
Overnight:		
Men	186	84
Women	66	16
Children under 18 years	2	3
More than one night, less than one month:		
Men	279	159
Women	76	22
Children under 18 years	3	—
One month or more	—	—

[1] Unless otherwise stated, the data include persons detained initially elsewhere prior to being detained at the location given.
[2] Data mainly exclude persons detained initially elsewhere, and exclude illegal entrants and deportees detained.
[3] Not used for overnight detention after 22 October 1993.
[4] January to June 1994.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were received into prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994 to the latest convenient date, by individual prison establishment; what was the average daily population of persons so detained in each of those years; what was the average length of time spent in detention by persons so detained in each of those years; and if he will give a breakdown by nationality of persons so detained for each of those years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of detainees received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales under the Immigration Act 1971 is given in table 1 for 1993 and for January to May 1994. The number is shown by the establishment of initial reception.

The average population in 1993, including persons originally received for a criminal offence, was 431. The average for January to May 1994 is 510. A breakdown of receptions into Prison Service establishments by nationality is given for 1993 and for January to May 1994 in table 2.

The average period of detention for detainees released in 1993 and in January to May 1994 is provisionally estimated at 12 weeks and 15 weeks respectively.

Table 1
Receptions of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales: by establishment 1993 and January-May 1994

Establishment	Number of Persons[1,2] 1993	1994
Remand Centres		
Blakenhurst	41	32
Brinsford	5	6
Dorchester	19	2
Exeter	9	8
Feltham	49	4
Glen Parva	1	1
Haslar	475	188
Low Newton	2	—
Moorland	6	—
Lancaster Farms	—	1
Local Prisons		
Bedford	23	—
Belmarsh	38	7
Birmingham	189	84
Bristol	22	8
Brixton	36	22
Bullingdon	1	2
Canterbury	130	46
Cardiff	6	1
Chelmsford	17	—
Dover	35	25
Durham	9	2
Elmley	25	15
Gloucester	8	3
Highdown	56	20
Hindley	1	—
Holloway	59	17
Holme House	10	5
Hull	30	6
Leeds	15	6
Leicester	41	—
Lewes	33	—
Lincoln	12	—
Liverpool	14	14
Manchester	8	17
Norwich	30	16
New Hall	2	—
Pentonville	204	42
Preston	3	—
Pucklechurch	3	—
Reading	5	3
Risley	2	2
Rochester	13	4
Shrewsbury	5	6
Swansea	6	7
Wandsworth	8	8
Winchester	9	6
Wolds	7	1
Wood Hill	9	—
Wormwood Scrubs	26	11
Establishment not recorded	2	2
Nationality not recorded/other	26	11
All Establishments	1,785	661

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
[2] Provisional figures.

Table 2
Receptions into Prison Service establishments by nationality, 1993 to 31 May 1994

Nationality	Number of persons[1,2] 1993	1 January to 31 May 1994
Afghanistan	5	—
Albania	4	3
Algeria	105	49
Angola	39	6
Anguilla	1	1
Armenia	1	—
Ascensioni Island	3	—
Austria	1	—
Australia	2	—
Bahrain	1	—
Bangladesh	36	15
Barbados	—	1
Belgium	1	1
Brazil	3	1
Bulgaria	3	—
Cameroon, United Republic of	4	1
Canada	2	2
Central African Republic	2	—
Chad	1	—
Chile	1	—
China	18	6
Colombia	17	3
Congo	4	—
Cyprus	9	3
Czechoslovakia	—	1
Denmark	—	1
Dominica	2	1
Djibouti	1	1
Egypt	12	2
Ethiopia	5	4
Equador	2	—
France	19	2
Gambia	4	2
Germany	3	1
Ghana	119	55
Grenada	1	—
Guinea	2	—
Guinea-Bissau	1	—
Guyana	3	1
Haiti	—	1
Hong Kong	13	2
Hungary	1	—
India	332	130
Indonesia	2	—
Iran	6	1
Irish Republic	5	2
Indian Ocean Territories	1	—
Israel	6	1
Iraq	2	1
Italy	5	—
Ivory Coast	16	10
Jamaica	67	18
Japan	—	1
Jordan	1	1
Kenya	18	6
Kuwait	1	—
Lebanon	11	2
Liberia	11	7
Libya	14	2
Malaysia	9	1
Mali	—	2
Morocco	26	7
Mauritania	1	—
Mauritius	3	1
Malawi	1	—
Mexico	1	—
Mozambique	—	2
Netherlands	—	5
Netherland Antillies	—	1
Nepal	1	3
Nicaragua	2	—
Niger	5	2
Nigeria	254	87
Pakistan	87	37
Peru	7	—
Philippines	3	—
Poland	12	5
Portugal	3	3
Romania	73	10
Russia	10	4
Saudi Arabia	1	—
Senegal	1	—
Singapore	1	—
Sierre Leone	26	4
Slovakia	—	1
Somalia	22	5
South Africa	9	4
Spain	3	—
Sri Lanka	24	13
St. Lucia	2	—
Sudan	4	3
Syrian Arab Republic	1	—
Switzerland	2	—
Tanzania	11	4
Togo	—	1
Thailand	—	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1	—
Tunisia	4	3
Turkey	117	54
Uganda	12	—
United Arab Emirates	4	—
United States of America	9	2
Yemen, Arab Republic (North)	2	—
Yemen, Peoples Democratic Republic (South)	2	—
Yugoslavia	5	6
Zambia	3	3
Zaire	39	26
Zimbabwe	2	2
Nationality not recorded/other	27	11
All	1,785	661

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
[2] Provisional figures.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *253*, how many of the 29 entry clearance applications were successful, how many refused, and how many of those decisions were appealed against;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *253*, of the 29 entry clearance applications, what is the longest period of time which it has taken for the application to be determined from date of application to notification to the application of decision; what was the average length of time of decision making; and what was the shortest period of time within which a decision was reached.

Mr. Charles Wardle This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, what was the nationality of the citizens of the Union and the third-country national

spouses of the 39 applicants for residence documents who were interviewed in respect of their applications in 1993 and 1994;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, how many of the 39 applications made between 1993 and 1994 for residence documents, in which an interview was carried out, applications were *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* were otherwise disposed; and in what way they were so disposed of.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 18 July,*Official Report*, columns *36-38*.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for asylum have been refused with 48 hours in which to lodge an appeal since 26 July 1993; and how many people served with such notice have lodged appeals;

(2) how many asylum applications, by nationality, have been refused as being unfounded *(a)* on safe third-country grounds and *(b)* on other grounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information, covering the period 1 August 1993 to 30 June 1994, on the number of refusals on safe third-country by nationality is given in the table. There were 845 third-country refusals, of which an estimated 300 were "fast-track" refusals who had 48 hours in which to lodge an appeal. In addition, provisional data suggest that about 300 cases have been refused on other without-foundation grounds.

Information on the number of "fast-track" appeals lodged or on the nationality of those refused on other without-foundation grounds is not readily available.

Decisions[1][2] to refuse asylum and exceptional leave on safe third country grounds[3], by nationality, 1 August 1993 to 30 June 1994

Number of principal applicants

Europe and Americas	*Number*
Bulgaria	*
Colombia	10
Romania	20
Turkey	110
Former USSR	15
Former Yugoslavia	35
Others	30
Africa	
Angola	40
Benin	*
Cameroon	*
Congo	5
Ethiopia	30
Ghana	60
Nigeria	25
Sierra Leone	30
Somalia	80
Sudan	5
Togo & Ivory Coast	15
Uganda	10
Zaire	35
Others	80
Total	425
Middle East	
Iran	10
Iraq	20
Lebanon	5
Others	15
Total	45
Asia	
China	10
India	20
Pakistan	15
Sri Lanka	95
Others	10
Total	155
Other and unknown nationalities	*
Grand total	845

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] Figures rounded to nearest 5, with '*'=1 or 2.
[3] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

Deportations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women, have been deported in the first six months of 1994; and what was the nationality of each person.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been deported from Scotland in each of the past five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of people whose departure was enforced as a result of deportation action initiated in Scotland in each of the years 1989-1993 is shown in the table. The table also shows separately the number of people who were removed as illegal entrants. The sex of those concerned is not recorded centrally and such a breakdown could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Deportation action	33	11	29	46	16
Illegal entry action	18	12	37	35	15

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number who joined*	*Number who left*
1990	1	2
1991	1	—
1992	2	2
1993	2	2
[1]1994	—	—

[1] To date.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many special advisers who left

his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Fire Regulations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make new Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations; when they will take effect; what estimates he has made of the provisional costs to *(a)* the public sector generally and *(b)* schools of complying with the new regulations.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will implement the Fire Precautions (Place of Work) Regulations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The report of the interdepartmental review of fire safety legislation and enforcement recommended that the Home Office should not proceed with the proposed Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations but that the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 should instead be amended to implement fully the framework and workplace directives relating to the health and safety of workers at work. The Government are considering those recommendations.

The possible compliance costs to the public sector, including schools, have still to be finally assessed in the light of comments from other Government Departments. However, a compliance cost assessment will form part of any consultation document containing proposals for regulations to implement the general fire safety provisions of the framework and workplace directives.

Racial Equality

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many race equality councils, or community relations councils, were in existence each year since 1988; and how many race equality officers, or their equivalent, grant-aided by the Commission for Racial Equality, were in post in each of these years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of racial equality councils—RECs—funded by the Commission for Racial Equality under section 44 of the Race Relations Act 1976 from 1988 is as follows. Almost all of these also receive local authority funding.

	Number
1988	85
1989	84
1990	83
1991	91
1992	88
1993	91

These figures do not include RECs which are funded only by the local authority. In 1993 the total number of RECs in the country was approximately 104.

The numbers of racial equality officers funded by the Commission for Racial Equality since 1988 is as follows:

	Number
1988	199
1989	191
1990	201
1991	211
1992	192
1993	150

Prison Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost per month of keeping someone in prison in 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the average cost per month of keeping someone in prison in 1993-94.

The estimated net operating cost per prisoner per month for 1993-94 is £2,326.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the ethnic breakdown of all prisoners received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking what was the ethnic breakdown of all prisoners received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

An ethnic breakdown by age and type of custody for prisoners received during the period July 1984 to March 1985 is shown in Tables 5 and 6 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/86 "The Ethnic Origins of Prisoners; the Prison Population on 30 June 1985 and Persons Received, July 1984—March 1985"; a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The corresponding information for receptions in 1990 is in the attached table.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments in 1990: by ethnic origin, age, type of custody and sex

England and Wales — *Number and percentage*[1]

Type of prisoner	*Ethnic origin* *White*	*West Indian Guyanese African*	*Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi*	*Chinese Arab Mixed origin*	*Other, not recorded (including refusals)*	*Totals*
MALES						*Number*
Aged under 21						
Untried	15,033	1,130	388	422	268	17,241
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	6,573	414	129	159	112	7,387
Under sentence						
Immediate custody	12,463	771	323	283	159	13,999
Fine defaulters	3,190	71	29	36	34	3,360
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	2	19	6	14	7	48
Others	45	6	—	—	2	53
Aged 21 and over						
Untried	26,839	4,041	792	640	351	32,663
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	8,514	941	181	163	76	9,875
Under sentence						
Immediate imprisonment	30,121	3,031	746	507	332	34,737
Fine defaulters	11,638	540	103	117	56	12,454
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	37	382	199	117	110	845
Others	1,103	108	48	21	12	1,292
Aged under 21						*Percentage*
Untried	87·2	6·6	2·3	2·4	1·6	100
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	89·0	5·6	1·7	2·2	1·5	100
Under sentence						
Immediate custody	89·0	5·5	2·3	2·0	1·1	100
Fine defaulters	94·9	2·1	0·9	1·1	1·0	100
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	4·2	39·6	12·5	29·2	14·6	100
Others	84·9	11·3	—	—	3·8	100
Aged 21 and over						
Untried	82·2	12·4	2·4	2·0	1·1	100
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	86·2	9·5	1·8	1·7	0·8	100
Under sentence						
Immediate imprisonment	86·7	8·7	2·1	1·5	1·0	100
Fine defaulters	93·4	4·3	0·8	0·9	0·4	100
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	4·4	45·2	23·6	13·8	13·0	100
Others	85·4	8·4	3·7	1·6	0·9	100
FEMALES						
Aged under 21						*Totals*
Untried	562	54	4	32	27	679
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	251	12	2	10	8	283
Under sentence						
Immediate custody	319	40	4	14	4	381
Fine defaulters	150	5	1	4	2	162
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	1	2	—	—	—	3
Others	8	1	—	—	—	9
Aged 21 and over						
Untried	1,447	340	28	103	75	1,993
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	550	85	8	19	21	683
Under sentence						
Immediate imprisonment	1,351	253	15	68	47	1,734
Fine defaulters	603	46	1	22	11	683
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	—	15	1	3	1	20
Others	29	11	2	1	1	44
Aged under 21						*Percentage*
Untried	82·8	8·0	0·6	4·7	4·0	100
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	88·7	4·2	0·7	3·5	2·8	100
Under sentence						
Immediate custody	83·7	10·5	1·0	3·7	1·0	100

Type of prisoner	Ethnic origin: White	West Indian Guyanese African	Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi	Chinese Arab Mixed origin	Other, not recorded (including refusals)	Totals
Fine defaulters	92·6	3·1	0·6	2·5	1·2	100
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	33·3	66·7	—	—	—	100
Others	88·9	11·1	—	—	—	100
Aged 21 and over						
Untried	72·6	17·1	1·4	5·2	3·8	100
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	80·5	12·4	1·2	2·8	3·1	100
Under sentence						
Immediate imprisonment	77·9	14·6	0·9	3·9	2·7	100
Fine defaulters	88·3	6·7	0·1	3·2	1·6	100
Non-criminal prisoners						
Immigration Act 1971	—	75·0	5·0	15·0	5·0	100
Others	65·9	25·0	4·5	2·3	2·3	100

[1] Percentages rounded independently and may not add up to totals.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the ethnic breakdown of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question on the ethnic breakdown of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

The latest available provisional information is for 31 May 1994 and is given in the attached table.

Population in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 31 May 1994 by sex and ethnic origin[1]

	Ethnic Origin: White	Black African, Caribbean, Other	South Asian Bangladeshi, Indian Pakistani	Chinese and Other Other Asian, Other, Chinese, Not recorded (including refusal)	All persons
Males	39,028	5,283	1,372	1,061	46,744
Females	1,346	363	28	51	1,788
Total	40,374	5,646	1,400	1,112	48,532

[1]Provisional figures.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* sentenced and *(b)* unsentenced prisoners are currently being held in temporary allocation centres; and at which prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of prisoners held in temporary allocation centres.

The only temporary allocation centre is located at Risley prison. On 15 July, the Risley temporary allocation centre held 138 sentenced and 24 unsentenced prisoners.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male foreign nationals and *(b)* female foreign nationals were held in prison in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many (a) male foreign nations and (b) female foreign nationals were held in prison in England and Wales at the latest available date.

The latest available provisional information is for 31 May 1994. On that date there were 3,780 non-British citizens (3,470 males and 310 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. This includes 600 male and 20 female nationals from the Irish Republic. A further 470 persons had no nationality recorded.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by gender of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will give a breakdown by gender of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

On 15 July 1994 there were 47,247 males and 1,859 females held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. A further 121 males were held in police cells.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by age of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will give a breakdown by age of all prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

The latest available information is for 31 May 1994. On that date there were 8,366 young offenders, ie persons aged under 21 years of age or 21 year old sentenced prisoners not classified as adults, and 40,166 adults held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. More detailed information by age for sentenced prisoners is published in "Prison statistics, England and Wales" (table 1.10 of the 1992 edition, Cm 2581), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on which occasions since 1 April prisoners have been held three to a cell designed for one; at which prisons; and how many prisoners have been held three to a cell on each occasion.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about prisoners sharing three to a cell designed for one.

This information is reported by establishments on the last Friday of each month.

Since 1 April 1994, no prisoners have been reported as sharing three to a cell designed for one.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners have committed suicide in the year 1994-95 to date; and how many of those were remand prisoners;

(2) how many of the prisoners who committed suicide in 1993-94 were remand prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about self-inflicted deaths in prison.

This information is collected by calendar year, and is given in the following table.

Year	*Male*		*Female*	
	Total	*Remand*	*Total*	*Remand*
1993	46	19	1	1
1994 (until 18 July)	24	10	1	0

Firearms

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the level of firearms fees and extend the period of validity of a firearms or shotgun certificate.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in determining the level of fee paid for a firearm or shotgun licence.

Mr. Howard: We have been reviewing the level of fees under the Firearms Acts and considering whether the life of a firearm or shot-gun certificate should be increased. As a result of this, I will be laying an order in both Houses in the autumn increasing the following fees:

	Current Fee	*Proposed New Fee*
Firearm Certificate		
Issue	46	56
Shot Gun Certificate		
Issue	17	43
Renew	11	18
Registered Firearm Dealer		
Issue of certificate	94	118
Home Office Club Approval	33	84

The following fees will remain at their current level:

	£
Firearm certificate renewal	46
Firearm certificate variation	26
Firearm certificate replacement	9
Shotgun certificate replacement	8
Registered firearm dealer renewal	50
Register dealer in new area for purpose of game fair, etc.	12
Individual British visitor's permit	12
Group British visitor's permit	60
Museum licence	[1]200
Grant of coterminous certificate	5

[1] Maximum.

I also intend to lay an order before both Houses in the autumn increasing the life of firearm and shot-gun certificates from three to five years, using the power granted to me by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1992. I intend that both orders will take effect from 1 January 1995.

The proposed fee levels are designed to reflect the cost to the police service of operating the system, taking into account the best practice guidelines for administering the firearms licensing system which we issued to chief officers in 1991 and a subsequent costing exercise undertaken by the consultants Ernst and Young.

In calculating costs we have assumed that police forces are already well on the way to operating best practice and will continue to make efficiency savings during the five-year period over which costs have been calculated. In the case of shotgun fees the cost of additional checks required since the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 is reflected for the first time. In particular, on first application, the police must make a home visit to make sure that the requirement for safe keeping at all times is satisfied. The increase for issue of a shotgun certificate amounts to only £3 per year over the five-year period of certificate life. The fee for renewal of a shotgun certificate remains almost exactly the same per year as it is now.

Those shooters who take advantage of the coterminous certificate arrangements will be better off as they will still pay £51 for five-year certificates instead of three-year certificates.

Without these increases there would be a shortfall in income of some £8 million over the five years to meet the police costs, a shortfall which would have to be met at the expense of some other police activity.

I have today placed in the Library of both Houses a copy of the Ernst and Young report "Firearms Licensing Costs".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making a similar separate order in relation to fees in Scotland.

Prisoners' Compacts

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which prisons in England and Wales prisoners' compacts were in operation at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about prisons in England and Wales in which prisoners' compacts were in operation at the latest available date.

On 30 June 61 establishments were operating prisoners' compacts. A list is attached as an annex.

Annex

Askham Grange
Aylesbury
Bedford
Blakenhurst
Blantyre House
Blundeston
Brinsford
Bristol
Bullwood Hall
Canterbury
Chelmsford
Coldingley
Deerbolt
Dorchester
Downview
Drake Hall
Durham
Erlestoke House
Eversthorpe
Featherstone
Feltham
Gloucester
Grendon
Haslar
Hatfield
High Down
Hindley
Hollesley Bay
Hull
Kirklevington Grange
Leyhill
Lincoln
Lindholme
Long Lartin
Low Newton
Maidstone
Manchester
Moorland
The Mount
New Hall
Nottingham
Northallerton
Norwich
Pentonville
Risley
Rochester
Send
Spring Hill
Stocken
Stoke Heat
Swaleside
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Wakefield
Werrington
Wetherby
Whitemoor
Winchester
Wormwood Scrubs
Wymott

Fine Defaulters

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* female fine defaulters and *(b)* male fine defaulters were received into prisons in England and Wales in 1993;

(2) what percentage of receptions into prisons in England and Wales in 1993 were fine defaulters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions asking how many *(a)* female fine defaulters and *(b)* male fine defaulters were received into prisons in England and Wales in 1993 and what percentage of receptions into prisons in England and Wales in 1993 were fine defaulters.

Provisional information for 1993 shows that 21,280 males and 1,340 females were received into Prison Service establishments for fine default accounting for 30 per cent. of all persons received under sentence.

Prison Drug Programmes

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *203*, what assessment has he made of the effectiveness of drug addiction programmes in prisons; and what plans there are to increase the number of drug programmes available to prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question on drug addiction programmes in prisons.

The Prison Service are commissioning an external research team to evaluate a drug treatment programme that has been running in one establishment for over two years.

An external researcher has also been commissioned to provide a literature review of different types of drug treatment programme used in the Prison Service, other prison systems and/or the community.

The results of these two pieces of research will help to inform the Prison Service Strategic Plan on which treatment programmes are best suited to prisons and how many programmes will be required.

Prison Accommodation

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* certified normal accommodation, *(b)* operational capacity and *(c)* actual population at each prison in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the capacity and population of prisons in England and Wales.

The attached table shows the certified normal accommodation (CNA), operational capacity and actual population of each prison on 30 June 1994.

Certified normal accommodation, operational capacity and population in prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 1994

Establishment	*Certified normal accommodation in use*	*Operational capacity*	*Population*
Acklington	658	658	597
Albany	436	436	427
Aldington	127	127	118
Ashwell	404	404	388
Askham Grange	126	127	100
Aylesbury	230	233	228
Bedford	303	329	294
Belmarsh	841	841	712
Birmingham	562	850	790
Blakenhurst	649	649	612
Blantyre House	95	95	94
Blundeston	408	408	395
Brinsford	446	446	439
Bristol	423	473	426
Brixton	484	668	597
Brockhill	111	120	79
Bullingdon	635	635	615
Bullwood Hall	125	125	120
Camp Hill	378	441	400
Canterbury	184	275	271
Cardiff	334	450	430
Castington	300	300	276
Channings Wood	594	594	569
Chelmsford	230	393	348
Coldingley	292	292	282
Cookham Wood	120	120	120
Dartmoor	538	538	497
Deerbolt	450	450	385
Doncaster	771	120	169
Dorchester	138	232	212
Dover	316	316	246
Downview	287	291	279
Drake Hall	255	255	226
Durham	399	577	629
East Sutton Park	94	94	84
Elmley	627	627	603
Erlestoke	250	250	243
Everthorpe	228	228	223
Exeter	274	473	385
Featherstone	599	599	566
Feltham	842	842	784
Finnamore Wood	106	106	11
Ford	536	536	450
Frankland	447	432	426
Full Sutton	604	576	551
Garth	512	512	504
Gartree	277	277	265
Glen Parva	767	788	769
Gloucester	211	271	255
Grendon	190	186	181
Guys Marsh	240	180	176
Hollesley Bay	365	365	298
Haslar	131	131	143
Hatfield	180	180	177
Haverigg	381	381	362
Hewell Grange	156	179	168
Highdown	549	549	529
Highpoint	679	679	610
Hindley	280	319	307
Holloway	517	532	483
Holme House	649	649	594
Hull	328	430	366
Huntercombe	226	225	210
Kingston	154	154	137
Kirkham	644	620	551
Kirklevington	74	74	71
Lancaster Farms	364	364	364
Lancaster	260	246	256
Latchmere House	145	145	142
Leeds	814	1,168	1,108
Leicester	192	348	335
Lewes	282	377	306
Leyhill	410	410	398
Lincoln	444	628	627
Lindholme	567	567	539
Littlehey	593	583	553
Liverpool	931	1,267	1,169
Long Lartin	362	362	350
Low Newton	198	343	253
Maidstone	485	485	476
Manchester	850	850	850
Moorland	635	635	621
Morton Hall	168	168	165
New Hall	169	169	180
North Sea Camp	201	201	108
Northallerton	150	219	159
Norwich	327	476	384
Nottingham	222	222	207
Onley	520	520	450
Oxford	107	120	46
Parkhurst	306	266	229
Pentonville	559	765	742
Portland	420	420	330
Preston	382	545	489
Pucklechurch	56	81	62
Ranby	347	347	348
Reading	182	205	150
Risley	751	716	700
Rochester	294	330	208
Rudgate	287	300	268
Send	113	113	111
Shepton Mallet	158	211	170
Shrewsbury	168	307	301
Spring Hill	210	210	211
Stafford	358	530	511
Standford Hill	384	384	389
Stocken	396	396	389
Stoke Heath	300	300	267
Styal	180	209	227
Sudbury	413	348	351
Sudbury (Foston Hall)	96	96	92
Swaleside	512	512	499
Swansea	155	220	209
Swinfen Hall	182	182	182
Thorn Cross	209	209	177
The Mount	484	484	490
The Verne	552	538	528
The Wolds	320	368	359
Thorp Arch	166	166	164
Usk	241	241	234
Wormwood Scrubs	714	1,050	850
Wakefield	718	718	693
Wandsworth	821	1,033	866
Wayland	580	580	543
Wellingborough	344	314	308
Werrington	110	110	101
Wetherby	196	196	174
Whatton	216	216	212
Whitemoor	534	524	486
Winchester	368	492	396
Woodhill	566	566	507
Wymott	432	384	376

Establishment	Certified normal accommodation in use	Operational capacity	Population
Total	48,942	52,767	48,897

Entry Clearance

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average wait for all Bangladeshi applicants for entry clearance in each of the last four years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information available centrally is of waiting times to first interview. This is published in table 2.5 of the Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 9/94, "Control of Immigration: Statistics —Third and Fourth Quarters and Year 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

Game Licences

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to abolish the requirement for those who kill game to hold game licences.

Mr. Howard: I have decided that the licensing requirements for those who take or kill game, contained in the Game Act 1831 and the Game Licences Act 1860, should be abolished. Such abolition will also apply in Scotland.

Firearms Licences

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to establish a national firearms licensing board.

Mr. Howard: The proposal to establish a national firearms licensing authority to take over the administration of firearms licensing from the police was the subject of a public consultation paper in 1992, following a brief feasibility study. That study indicated that it would be feasible to introduce a national civilian-operated system which could be more cost-effective and achieve greater consistency in decision making.

A comprehensive revision of the original feasibility study has now been completed and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. It concludes that the establishment of a national licensing authority would generally improve the efficiency of the system, improve the quality of service to shooters in some areas and bring a consistency of approach to decision making. It did not address the question of how this could best be achieved but made a number of suggestions to improve the administration of the firearms licensing system.

However, the report also indicates that the original study, because of its limited remit, significantly underestimated the amount of work involved in the licensing system and that the staffing required for a national authority would be substantially higher than the levels originally proposed. The original study estimated start-up costs of £2·5 million and annual running costs of approximately £6 million. The revised study estimates that start-up costs would amount to about £4·1 million with an annual running cost in excess of £10 million. This is substantially more than the estimated cost of operating the current police system, which in 1994-95 is £7·6 million.

The report also identifies the need for a significant amount of continued police involvement in firearms licensing, the risk of duplication of effort and the difficulties involved in the interface of any licensing authority and the police.

After careful consideration of all the factors involved, I have decided not to proceed with the proposal to establish a separate firearms licensing authority. I accept that despite the efforts of police licensing departments there is still considerable scope for improving the efficiency and the consistency of approach of the existing firearms licensing system to the benefit of both the shooting fraternity and the police. Now that the future direction of the licensing system is settled, we must concentrate on building upon the improvements already achieved and I will be pursuing with the Association of Chief Police Officers and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary how existing "best practice" guidelines can be more consistently implemented.

Similar action will be taken on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Prison Staff

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of *(a)* staff posts and *(b)* actual numbers in post in each prison in England and Wales by rank, gender and race.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 May 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 20 July 1994

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about staff posts and numbers in post in prisons in England and Wales.

Table A lists target staffing figures (TSF) or funded posts and total staff in post at each prison on 30 April 1994. On 1 April 1993 Prison Service Headquarters devolved to governors the responsibility for recruiting prison officers and, subject to the maximum set by target staffing figures, deciding the number and mix of staff within their running costs budget. For historical reasons, some TSFs reflect former complements which were unfunded. Establishments now generally use funded posts, ie the number of posts assumed in setting the budget, as their yardstick for staffing purposes.

A breakdown of prison officer grades in post at every prison, showing the numbers in each grade who are women or member of ethnic minorities is at tables B and C. A breakdown of other staff could only be produced at disproportionate cost. The readily available information in table D shows the numbers in each grade who are women or members of ethnic minorities for the Service as a whole. The figures for Doncaster, which opened on 27 June, have not been given as it is not yet fully staffed.

A copy of these tables has been placed in the House of Commons library.

EU Citizens

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many United Kingdom citizens live and work in other EU member states; and how many citizens of each other EU member states live and work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Estimates of the number of foreign nationals from each EU member state who are in employment and living in the

United Kingdom are available from the labour force survey and are shown in the table. Information on the number of United Kingdom nationals working in other EU member states is not held centrally.

Numbers of foreign nationals of each EU member state in the United Kingdom
United Kingdom—Spring 1993
Number aged 16 or over living in the United Kingdom and in employment

Nationality	*Thousands*
Ireland	223
Italy	41
France	27
Portugal	18
Federal Republic of Germany	14
Netherlands	11
Spain	11
Greece	10
Denmark	[1]—
Belgium	[1]—
Luxembourg	[1]—

Source: Labour Force Survey.
[1]Estimates below 10,000 not shown.

Identity Cards

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has that identity cards containing electronicallystored information have contributed to a reduction in fraud in countries where they have been used.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

My Department holds no evidence of the contribution to the reduction in fraud levels relating to ID cards containing electronically stored information.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has instigated into the percentage or degree of error inherent in reading electronic identity cards.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

No research has been instigated into the percentage or degree of error inherent in reading electronic ID cards. In the context of a wider study on smart cards, Office of Public Service and Science officials have discussed the error rates relating to cards used within the banking sector. The false rejection rate is believed to be in the order of one in 100,000 uses.

SCOTLAND

Skin Cancer

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has received from the Association of Dermatologists on education about skin cancer in schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has not received any advice from the Association of Dermatologists on education about skin cancer in schools.

NHS asset Sales

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in each case since 1991-92 of land having been sold by a health board or NHS trust, whether the land was *(a)* donated to the NHS, *(b)* donated to a body pre-dating the creation of the NHS or *(c)* bought with public funds.

Mr. Stewart: Comprehensive information of the kind requested is not held centrally. This sort of detail is usually obtainable only from deeds, which are delivered to the purchaser on sale, and even these will not necessarily contain the appropriate information.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will require health board and NHS trusts to make public their decisions on what to do with the proceeds of sales of surplus land and buildings; and if he will require them to be used for improving patient services.

Mr. Stewart: It is for the NHS body managing the sale to consider what publicity should be given to decisions on the use of proceeds. For many years it has been the position that these proceeds should be used for the improvement of patient care.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The Scottish Office contributed to its preparation. In welcoming its publication, my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, invited everyone in Scotland with an interest in the issue, especially disabled people themselves, to let us have their views.

Child Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total public expenditure on out-of-school services for children from the age of five for each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Scotland for each of these years.

Mr. Stewart: Details of public expenditure on out-of-school services have not been separately identified. Indications are, however, that the number of such schemes is growing. This is being assisted by the Government's £45 million initiative aimed at encouraging the establishment of viable out-of-school and holiday schemes for school age children and by the support provided under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for the Scottish Out-of-School Childcare Network.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* nursery schools and classes and *(b)* children under five in reception classes, in each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information about public expenditure on nursery schools and classes since 1989-90 is:

	£ million
1989-90	39·69
1990-91	45·25
1991-92	51·23
1992-93	56·03

That expressed as a percentage of estimated Scottish GDP is:

	Per cent.
1989-90	0·11
1990-91	0·11
1991-92	0·12
1992-93	0·13

Information on expenditure related to children under five who attend primary schools is not recorded separately.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amount of funding allocated by his Department to Highlands and Islands Enterprise for development initiatives in Kintyre *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* over the past three financial years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The allocation of funds to specific areas for economic and social development purposes is the responsibility of Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Prison Service

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to the nearest £10,000 of market testing and related operations in the Scottish Prison Service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Tam Dalyell, dated 20 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the cost of market testing and related operations in the Scottish Prison Service.

The best estimate of cost to date, including staff time and consultancy fees in connection with market testing and related operations in the Scottish Prison Service, is approximately £950,000.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: My Department has employed two special advisers over the last five years, one of whom left in 1990 and was replaced.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

Mr. Lang: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Foreign Prisoners

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the official foreign language prison documents that are available to foreign prisoners being held in prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 20 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about official foreign language prison documents available to foreign prisoners being held in prisons.

The Scottish Prison Service provides "Notes for Guidance of Prisoners on Reception into Prison" in a number of languages. There is also available to foreign prisoners a Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department information leaflet which provides information on prisoners' rights and welfare matters. An SPS Prisoner's Information Pack is in course of preparation and consideration is being given to its translation in other languages.

In every establishment a member of staff has been appointed to act as Ethnic Minority Liaison Officer with responsibility for monitoring the welfare and progress of foreign prisoners. Their role includes interviewing such prisoners on admission and arranging interpreter facilities for prisoners with language difficulties.

Homelessness

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to make a statement following the responses to his consultation paper "Tackling Homelessness".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend received a large number of detailed responses to the consultation paper which he will consider carefully before making decisions to deal with homelessness in Scotland.

Wheelchairs

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many disabled persons were provided with powered wheelchairs by the Wheelchair Service in each of the past five years; and how many such applications were turned down in the same period of time;

(2) how many wheelchairs have been distributed to disabled people in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the expected life of a wheelchair issued by the Wheelchair Service; and after what interval a user may seek a replacement.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not held centrally.

On average 5,500 new wheelchairs, both manual and powered, are purchased annually for NHS patients, but wheelchairs can be issued and re-issued on more than one

occasion in the course of a year if returned as being no longer required. There is no stipulated period for replacement of a wheelchair since this will depend on usage, the condition of the chair and whether repair is possible. It is for the staff in wheelchair centres to decide when a replacement chair would be appropriate.

Food Poisoning

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of food poisoning were reported in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Stewart: The numbers of cases of food poisoning notified by doctors to health boards are set out as follows:

Year	*Number of notifications*
1979	2,657
1980	2,299
1981	2,920
1982	2,880
1983	2,632
1984	2,391
1985	1,967
1986	2,436
1987	2,480
1988	2,908
1989	3,157
1990	3,024
1991	2,738
1992	3,117
1993	3,255

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of laboratory reports of salmonella in foodstuffs in Scotland in each year since 1979; and what is the latest available figure for this year.

Sir Hector Monro: Information on the number of such reports of salmonella in foodstuffs is not held centrally; data are available on reported cases of salmonellosis, but these do not distinguish between cases originating from food or other sources.

Operating Theatres

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures for operating theatre sessions postponed or cancelled in each of the past four years because there were insufficient appropriate operating theatre staff available in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not centrally available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures and those for the previous four years of the number of operating theatre sessions postponed or cancelled because the appropriate back-up resources were absent or insufficient for *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not centrally available.

Carers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures for the number of carers in *(a)* the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Stewart: The 1990 general household survey estimated that there were 150,000 carers in Scotland who were looking after someone with whom they lived, and a further 600,000 carers providing help to people who lived elsewhere. No information on individual local authorities is held centrally.

Scottish Enterprise

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current membership of Scottish Enterprise along with the cost associated with servicing it and remuneration or expenses paid to its members in respect of their duties.

Mr. Stewart: The current membership of Scottish Enterprise and the remuneration, and so on, paid to its members in respect of their duties are set out in Scottish Enterprise's annual report and accounts which were laid before Parliament on 13 July 1994. The associated administrative cost of servicing the membership of Scottish Enterprise is an operational matter for that body and I have asked its chairman to write to the hon. Member.

School Meals

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, for each year since 1987, what was the percentage of school pupils entitled to free school meals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested taken from annual school meals census returns is as follows:

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals

	Per cent.
1988	n/a
1989	n/a
1990	16·8
1991	16·9
1992[1]	17·2
1993	18·2

[1] Excludes data for 28 nursery schools in Ayr Division of Strathclyde, and 21 special schools in Dumfries and Galloway.
n/a = Not available.

Figures for 1994 are not yet available.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much Scottish Homes spent hosting its landlord awareness seminar at its headquarters in June;

(2) how much Scottish Homes is paying Management Consultancy Services for examining its management structure;

(3) how much Scottish Homes has spent on its membership of the Quality Scotland Foundation;

(4) how much Scottish Homes expects to spend pursuing its application for the charter mark under the charter mark scheme;

(5) if he will make a statement on the costs incurred by Scottish Homes in holding its informal lunch for new employees in June;

(6) how much Scottish Homes has spent on corporate hospitality during the last 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes. I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon, to write to the hon. Member.

Charter Marks

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which public bodies under the operational control of the Scottish Office are now in receipt of the charter mark.

Mr. Lang: The following six public bodies which are sponsored by my Department are in receipt of charter mark awards:

Her Majesty's Prison, Dungavel, Lanarkshire
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust
Dumfries and Galloway Police
Dumfries and Galloway Fire Brigade
Tayside Police
University of Strathclyde, Careers Advisory Service

Her Majesty's Prison, Dungavel received its award in 1992. The other bodies received their awards in 1993.

Agricultural Payments

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total areas claimed by arable farmers in the Scottish non-less favoured area for crops and set-aside under the arable area payments scheme in 1994; how those figures relate to the baseline areas declared to the European Commission; what estimate he has made of the overshoot; and if he will make a statement on the scale of penalty that is likely to arise from such an overshoot.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The total areas claimed by arable farmers in the Scottish non-less favoured area under the arable area payments scheme in 1994, and so far recorded, are as follows:

	Hectares
Cereals	270,491
Linseed	259
Oilseeds	63,155
Protein Crops	2,042
Set-aside	69,671
less uncompensated set-aside[1]	2,190
Simplified scheme	19,395
Total	422,823

[1]The uncompensated element of the set-aside claim is not counted against the base area.

These figures are provisional and my Department's analysis of the claims is not yet complete. In particular, they do not include details of arable claims in respect of Scottish non-LFA land submitted to the other United Kingdom Agriculture Departments. In addition to the AAPS areas claimed, the EC rules also require that five-year set-aside land and land forming part of a forage area claim but growing cereals, linseed, oilseeds or protein crops—CLOPs—must also be counted against the base area. My Department's provisional estimate of these areas against the base area already submittted to the European Commission is as follows:

	Hectares
Total of arable claims (as above)	422,823
Estimate of Scottish non-LFA land submitted to the other United Kingdom Agriculture Departments	2,721
Five-year set-aside (provisional)	8,810
CLOPs in forage	12,471
Total	446,825
BASE AREA	430,467
Overshoot (PROVISIONAL)	16,358
	(3·8 PER CENT.)

Because of the measures which the Government obtained in Brussels to reduce the impact of the 1993 overshoot, only 20 per cent. of the penalties due in respect of the 1994 harvest in the Scottish non-LFA will be applied. A 3·8 per cent. overshoot would result in a 0·76 per cent. additional uncompensated set-aside requirement in 1995 and a corresponding reduction in AAPS payment rates this year. Regardless of the overshoot, between the autumn and next spring my Department will be paying over £120 million to Scottish farmers under the arable regime. This is a significant increase on last year's payments.

Psychiatric Beds

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his target for the number of psychiatric beds by 1999; and what is the current number of such beds.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* There are no such targets setting the number of psychiatric beds although there is a long-term aim to reduce long-stay beds by around 8,000. It is for individual health boards to determine future in-patient bed numbers, based on assessment of patients who are likely to require continuing specialist medical and nursing supervision.

The current average number of staffed psychiatric beds available is shown in the table.

Psychiatric speciality	*Number of beds*
Adolescent psychiatry	63
Child psychiatry	56
Mental illness	5,120
Psychogeriatrics	5,960
Psychiatric specialties	11,199

This excludes long-stay provision for people with learning disabilities and for the frail elderly.

Nurse Training and Education

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to provide for the retraining and redeployment of nurse teachers who are displaced as a result of the proposed reduction in the number of nursing students.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* It is for health boards as employers of Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery teaching and other staff, to determine what action should be taken in relation to surplus staff, in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost of the changes in nurse education since 1989 which result from the introduction of Project 2000.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The total cost to nurse education of the introduction in 1992 of Project 2000 is not separately identifiable. However, additional specific funding of approximately £57 million was made to health boards between 1990-91 and 1993-94. From 1994-95 onwards this additional funding is not identified separately in the health boards' allocations.

Airports

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the transfer of ownership of Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. to him from the Civil Aviation Authority to take place, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The transfer can be effected without the need for legislation. A number of important issues require to be resolved before the transfer takes place, including arrangements for future funding and for employee pensions. Subject to resolving the outstanding issues the transfer will take place by or before 1 April 1995.

EDUCATION

Student Loans

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the value of the student loans for each year since their introduction;

(2) if he will list the value of the student grant for each year since 1979 and for the 1994-95 academic year.

Mr. Boswell: Student loans were introduced in the academic year 1990-91. The table shows the value of the loans for that and subsequent academic years, and of student grants since 1979.

Value of the standard maintenance grant and loan

Academic Years	*Standard maintenance grant (cash terms) £*[1]		*Student loan (cash terms) £*[2]	*Total (grant+loan)*
1979-80	1,245	(1,287)[4]	—	—
1980-81	1,430	(1,478)[4]	—	—
1981-82	1,535	(1,587)[4]	—	—
1982-83	1,595	(1,649)[4]	—	—
1983-84	1,660	(1,716)[4]	—	—
1984-85	1,775	—	—	—
1985-86	1,830	—	—	—
1986-87	1,901	—	—	—
1987-88	1,972	—	—	—
1988-89	2,050	—	—	—
1989-90	2,155	—	—	—
1990-91	2,265	—	420	2,685
1991-92	2,265	—	580	2,845
1992-93	2,265	—	715	2,980
1993-94	2,265	—	800	3,065
1994-95	2,040	—	1,150	3,190

[1] Applies to students in England and Wales living away from home and studying outside London. It excludes any supplementary allowances.
[2] Applies to students in England, Wales and Scotland living away from home and studying outside London. Final year students get a lower level of loan because it does not cover the summer vacation period. The 1994-95 final year loan will be £840.
[3] Different rates of grant and loan apply to students studying in London and those living in the parental home.
[4] Includes adjustments to figures for 1983-84 and earlier for travel costs: up to, and including 1983-84, students claimed and were individually reimbursed full travelling expenses; from 1984-85 a flat-rate amount for travelling costs was incorporated within the main rate of grant.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

Mr. Forth: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The information is as follows:

Year	*Joined*	*Left*
1989	1	1
1990	1	1
1991	1	0
1992	1	2
1993	0	0

Pupil Numbers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his forecast for pupil numbers in *(a)* nursery and primary and *(b)* secondary schools for the academic years 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Mr. Robin Squire: The projected numbers of pupils in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England are as follows:

Thousands

	Nursery and primary schools	*Secondary schools*
At January of each academic year		
1994-95	4,192	2,989
1995-96	4,268	3,023
1996-97	4,316	3,061
1997-98	4,347	3,094

School Meals

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for each year since 1987, what was the percentage of school pupils entitled to free school meals.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was collected from maintained schools in England for the first time in January 1993. At this time, 20 per cent. of pupils were reported as known to be eligible for free school meals.

Special Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which local education authorities have submitted plans for the discontinuance of a special school under section 14 of the Education Act 1981 and section 183 of the Education Act 1993 and have not received final replies; which of these have been waiting *(a)* three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six and 12 months and *(d)* more than 12 months; and if he will name the schools affected in each case.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is provided in the table. There are proposals from four LEAs which have been outstanding for more than 12 months. In all these cases further information has had to be sought from the LEAs concerned. My right hon. Friend has decided, in the light of the new consolidated statutory regime under section 183 of the Education Act 1993, to set a general target of seven months for the determination of special school proposals, and has asked officials to consult LEAs about ways of improving the information contained in LEA proposals to help expedite decisions.

LEA proposals for the closures of special schools which have not had determinant or "minded to" decisions, as at 19 July 1994

LEA and school	*Waiting time in months* <3	3-6	6-12	>12
Derbyshire				
Ashe Hall	•			
Kent				
Beech House		•		
Northamptonshire				
Eastfield		•		
Fairlawn		•		
Brookfield		•		
Nottinghamshire				
Appletongate				•
Linden				•
St Ann's Hospital	•			
Kinder Hospital	•			
University Hospital	•			
City Hospital	•			
Hopwell	•			
Bassetlaw	•			
Ewing	•			
Oxford				
Tesdale			•	
Bennet House			•	
East Sussex				
Robert Mitchell	•			
Walsall				
Beacon				•
Lambeth				
Aspen House		•		
Hyde Farm		•		
Lansdowne		•		
Barking and Dagenham				
Bentry			•	
Castle			•	
Faircross			•	
Hampshire				
Purzebrook			•	
Knowsley				
Cartbridge		•		
Lancashire				
Longridge	•			
Liverpool				
Harold Magnay				•
Sandfield Park				•
Finchlea				•
Longmoor				•
Millstead				•
Palmerston				•
Princes				•
Okfield				•
North Yorkshire				
Field Hospital		•		
Gateshead				
Joicy Road				•
Bradford				
Ashfield	•			

School Closures and Mergers

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which local education authorities have submitted plans for closure, re-organisation or merger of schools under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 and have not received final replies; which of these have been waiting *(a)* three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six and 12 months and *(d)* more than 12 months; and if he will name the schools affected in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: I am placing in the Library a table listing schools named in proposals under either section 12 or 13 of the Education Act 1980 which have been under consideration in the Department for *(a)* three months or less, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six and 12 months and *(d)* more than 12 months. Some statutory proposals affect more than one school.

Proposals received by my right hon. Friend within the last four months may in certain cases fall to the local authority for determination.

ENVIRONMENT

Bicycling

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with his colleagues at the Departments of Health, Education and Transport about encouraging children to bicycle to school, in order to reduce pollution and congestion, while encouraging health.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Minister for Roads and Traffic on Monday 18 July, *Official Report*, column *71*.

Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on current trends in the number of permanent dwellings *(a)* started, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* completed.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his reply, 24 June 1994, c. 307]:* My right hon. Friend announced on 7 July, *Official Report*, column *307*, the publication of the latest state of the construction industry report, produced jointly with the construction industry; copies are available in the Library. It points to a period of sustained modest growth, with private housing showing an improvement on last year. With steady growth in the economy and low interest rates, a vigorous and competitive construction industry is well set to take advantage of a period of steady sustained growth.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the information on urban regenerations pending given in his answer of 18 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *365-67*, so as to correspond with the single regeneration budget information sought in the later question.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply, 25 April 1994, columns 36-38]:* I regret that the table of figures included in my reply contained some errors. I therefore have revised the table which I have also placed in the Library to the House.

Expenditure on programmes within the SRB (£ million)

UDCs

Year	a	b
1981-82	37	73
1982-83	62	114
1983-84	95	167
1984-85	88	148
1985-86	82	130
1986-87	89	137
1987-88	160	234
1988-89	255	347
1989-90	477	609
1990-91	607	718
1991-92	602	667
1992-93	515	552
1993-94	372	387
1994-95	286	286
*1995-96	253	—
*1996-97	245	—

HATS

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	—	—
1991-92	10	11

Year	a	b
1992-93	27	29
1993-94	78	81
1994-95	88	88
*1995-96	90	—
*1996-97	90	—

URA

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	—	—
1991-92	—	—
1992-93	—	—
1993-94	22	23
1994-95	181	181
*1995-96	211	—
*1996-97	221	—

City Grant[1]

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	8	14
1984-85	15	25
1985-86	24	38
1986-87	24	37
1987-88	28	41
1988-89	28	38
1989-90	39	50
1990-91	45	53
1991-92	41	45
1992-93	44	47
1993-94	24	25
1994-95	—	—
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

DLG

Year	a	b
1981-82	30	59
1982-83	61	112
1983-84	68	120
1984-85	70	117
1985-86	75	119
1986-87	82	126
1987-88	80	117
1988-89	78	106
1989-90	65	83
1990-91	71	84
1991-92	89	99
1992-93	116	124
1993-94	99	103
1994-95	—	—
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

Urban Programme[2]

Year	a	b
1981-82	94	186
1982-83	160	295
1983-84	156	275
1984-85	278	466
1985-86	254	404
1986-87	237	365

Year	a	b
1987-88	246	359
1988-89	224	305
1989-90	223	285
1990-91	226	267
1991-92	238	264
1992-93	236	253
1993-94	170	177
1994-95	83	83
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

Task Forces

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	5	7
1988-89	23	31
1989-90	20	26
1990-91	21	25
1991-92	21	23
1992-93	24	26
1993-94	18	19
1994-95	16	16
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

CATS

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	4	5
1990-91	8	9
1991-92	8	9
1992-93	5	5
1993-94	3	3
1994-95	1	1
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

City Challenge

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	—	—
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	—	—
1991-92	—	—
1992-93	52	56
1993-94	221	230
1994-95	214	214
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

Estate Action

Year	a	b
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	—	—
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	—	—
1986-87	45	69
1987-88	75	110
1988-89	140	191
1989-90	190	243
1990-91	180	213
1991-92	268	297
1992-93	348	373
1993-94	358	372
1994-95	373	373
*1995-96	—	—
*1996-97	—	—

Rest of SRB[3]

Year	a	b
1981-82	50	98
1982-83	60	111
1983-84	67	118
1984-85	63	106
1985-86	69	110
1986-87	73	113
1987-88	76	111
1988-89	70	95
1989-90	94	120
1990-91	108	128
1991-92	226	251
1992-93	215	230
1993-94	258	269
1994-95	201	201
*1995-96	778	—
*1996-97	768	—

Notes:
a=Cash Terms.
b=Current Prices.
*=Current Plans.
[1]includes UDG and URG.
[2]includes Urban Crime Fund payments in 1992-93.
[3]Up to 1994-95. Rest of SRB is made up from: Regional Enterprise Grant, Safer Cities, section 11. Ethnic Minority Grant, Ethnic Minority Business Initiatives, Programme Development Fund (PDF), TEC Challenge, Business Start-up Scheme, Local Initiative Fund, Compacts, Education Business Partnerships, Teacher Placement Service and GEST 19. From 1995-96 Rest of SRB also includes Urban Programme, Task Forces, City Action Teams (CATS), City Challenge, and Estate Action.
PDF=figures are for Great Britain, except for 1994-95 when they are for England only.
s11 (urban)=figures include payments to non-UPA ILEA authorities prior to 1991-92.
City Challenge=also supported by £19 million per year from the Housing Corporation.
Urban Regeneration Agency (URA)—from 1994-95 subsumed City Grant and Derelict Land Grant.

County Hall

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria were used to distribute to the London boroughs the proceeds from the sale of County hall; if he will make a statement about the balance between the receipt from the sale of County hall and the sum distributed to the London boroughs; and when the London Residuary Body received full payment from the sale of the riverside building.

Mr. Curry: The proceeds received before 30 November 1993 from the disposal of the riverside building of County hall were distributed by the London Residuary

Body to the London boroughs in proportion to the total populations of each borough in accordance with the London Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) (Amendment) Order 1993. The terms of the sale—including the sale price—are a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what interest has been expressed recently in the purchase of the unsold parts of the County hall complex; and what were the conditions of sale for the riverside building and for the unsold part of the County hall complex.

Mr. Baldry: The sale of the remainder of the County hall site is a matter for the London Residuary Body. The conditions of the sale of the riverside building and any conditions for the sale of the remainder of the site area are a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Local Government, Worthing

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that any public consultation document issued to ascertain views on the draft recommendation of the Local Government Commission affecting Worthing will include a status quo option, as well as the two alternatives put forward which are identical as far as the Worthing constituency is concerned.

Mr. Curry: The period of public consultation on the Local Government Commission's draft recommendations for the future local government in east and west Sussex began on 12 July 1994 and will end on 26 September 1994. The recommendations themselves and the method of consultation on them are matters for the commission, not for the Government.

Before submitting its final recommendations to the Secretary of State the commission must take into consideration any representations made to it during the consultation period. The commission's final recommendations may differ from the preliminary recommendations, as a result of its consultations. Once the final report of the commission has been submitted there is a minimum period of six weeks during which representations can be made to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State can accept, modify or reject the commission's recommendations, or can direct the commission to conduct a further review. Any order implementing structural change is subject to affirmative resolution in both Houses.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Review

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether adequate statutory powers exist for elections at the commencement of shadow periods of all new unitary authorities established consequent upon the local government review for England, including new authorities which have boundaries coterminous with either *(a)* an existing county authority or *(b)* an existing district authority; and if he will specify the source of those powers.

Mr. Curry: The Government are satisfied that the statutory powers contained in sections 17 and 19 of the Local Government Act 1992 are adequate for such elections.

Rural Housing Trust

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are taken to ensure that the Rural Housing Trust accounts for public funds received by the trust from the Housing Corporation.

Sir George Young: The Rural Housing Trust—RHT—is not a registered housing association and does not therefore receive allocations of housing association grant—HAG—from the Housing Corporation. The corporation provides HAG to registered rural housing associations which work closely with the RHT. All registered rural housing associations are subject to the corporation's regulatory framework and their development projects are subject to the corporation's sample scheme audits.

The RHT received a revenue grant from the corporation for £7,590 in October 1992 to develop and investigate appropriate tenant involvement in four rural housing associations in the midlands. The corporation considers that the project achieved value for money.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding is provided for help in the removal of toxic waste deposits from former industrial sites in the Greater London area.

Mr. Atkins: Under the "polluter pays" principle, the responsibility for funding the removal of toxic wastes rests with the owner or operator of the site. The availability of any public funds to help will depend on the particular circumstances. Removal of such waste as part of a regeneration scheme might be eligible for grant aid by English Partnerships. A local authority involved in a removal operation might be able to apply this Department for a supplementary credit approval.

Diabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role will be taken by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination in building access.

Mr. Baldry: On 15 July, the Government published a consultation document on measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people. My Department will continue to be involved with other Departments in the development of measures arising from that consultation. I aim to publish, by the end of the year, a consultation paper on ways in which the building regulations could be extended to require provisions in new dwellings for the benefit of disabled people.

Homelessness

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses his Department had on the homelessness consultation document; and how many were supportive of the Government proposals.

Sir George Young: We received about 10,000 responses to the consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies". The paper contained at least 10 distinct proposals, some of which commanded widespread support from the more informed commentators. The responses are available for inspection in my Department's library.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received from the waste-to-energy industry regarding his Department's circular 8/91;

(2) what plans he has to update his Department's circular 8/91;

(3) if he will recommend improvements to the local authority tendering process for waste disposal contracts in his Department's response to the report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution on incineration.

Mr. Atkins: We have received representations from the Energy from Waste Association, formerly the recycling waste-to-energy group, about the advice given to waste disposal authorities in circular 8/91—competition for local authority waste disposal contracts and new arrangements for disposal operations—on the duration of waste disposal contracts. In particular, the industry wishes us to emphasise the importance to waste-to-energy schemes of long-term contracts. Similar representationss have been made by the producer responsibility group in its proposals for recovering value from packaging waste.

My Department is currently reviewing the guidance given to local authorities in circular 8/91 about tendering for waste disposal contracts and we intend to issue updated guidance later this year. Among other things, the updated guidance will re-emphasise the importance of taking environmental factors into account in the tendering process, including the benefits of the waste-to-energy option in appropriate circumstances and the contractual arrangements most likely to facilitate its development.

The Government will publish their response to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's report on incineration shortly. Our response will address the royal commission's recommendation that waste disposal authorities should be encouraged to enter into long-term contracts with operators of incineration plants, extending over 10 years or more. However, this is not an appropriate vehicle for offering detailed guidance on the considerations which should be taken into account by authorities in the tendering process.

Water and Sewerage Charges

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will replace the present rateable valuation system by a system based on council tax banding as the basis of charging for water and sewerage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, column 766.

Bathing Water

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many samples, and from how many sites, were taken in each European member state from the sea during each of the last three years for the purpose of assessing compliance with the European Community directive on bathing water quality; how many field staff were involved; and what have been the results in respect of salmonella and enteroviruses;

(2) how many samples were taken from the sea in the United Kingdom in each of the last three years as part of the nation's bathing water quality survey; how many staff were involved; how many samples were taken; how many sites were identified for the purposes of assessing compliance with the European Community directive on bathing water quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Information on the numbers of coastal bathing water sites monitored under the bathing water Directive, the number of samples and the results for each member state, but not the number of field staff involved, is included in the EC Commission annual report on bathing waters. Information for 1991, 1992 and 1993 is contained in the 1992 and 1993 reports, copies of which have been placed in the Library. The reports show the high standard of the United Kingdom monitoring programme and the continuing steady improvement in United Kingdom bathing water compliance.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which countries have received funds from the European Union for cleaning up their beaches and improving the quality of their water supplies in each of the last three years; and what are the amounts received.

Mr. Atkins: For the period 1989 to 1993, the European Commission allocated to member states grants from the European regional development fund of the amounts shown. ERDF grant assistance may be used for a wide variety of activities, including the provision of water infrastructure and environmental projects. There are no published figures available which show the amounts specifically allocated to the cleaning of beaches or for the improvement of water quality.

ERDF

	(MECU 1992 Prices)
Belgium	330
Denmark	60
Germany	2,482
Greece	4,508
Spain	9,071
France	2,151
Irish Republic	2,019
Italy	6,631
Luxembourg	31
Netherlands	166
[illegible]al	4,592
United Kingdom	3,235
Total	35,276

Harassment (Landlords)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the harassment of women in private rented accommodation by their landlords; what representations he has received by *(a)* women individually and *(b)* women's organisations; if he will list the women's organisations concerned; and what is the total number of complaints he has received.

Sir George Young: We are aware of and deplore this kind of behaviour by a small minority of unscrupulous landlords. It was for this reason that the Housing Act 1988 strengthened the provisions against harassment in the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, to increase protection for all tenants.

Since 1991, we have received a total of 24 complaints from private tenants alleging harassment by their landlords. Of these, five were from individual women, but only one of these implied sexual harassment. No representations have been received from women's organisations.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has received from women's organisations for dealing with harassment by private landlords; what consultations he has had with *(a)* women's organisations and *(b)* private landlords about harassment; and what proposals he has for dealing with harassment of women in private accommodation by landlords.

Sir George Young: No proposals for dealing with harassment have been received from women's organisations, nor have there been any recent consultations on this issue.

Local authorities are empowered to prosecute landlords who harass tenants under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977. Many local authorities have tenancy relations teams to investigate complaints of harassment.

Social Housing

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for more investment in social housing based on need.

Sir George Young: My Department's expenditure plans for the period 1994-95 to 1996-97 are set out in its annual report, Cm 2507. Directing public spending towards the areas and households thart are in greatest need is a high priority for our housing programmes.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

Mr. Gummer: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is:

	Joined	*Left*
1989	2	1
1990	1	1
1991	6	1
1992	1	5
1993	1	1

So far this year, one special adviser has joined and one has left this Department.

Council Tax

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures on the number of properties in each of the eight council tax bands *(a)* in figures and *(b)* in percentage terms.

Mr. Curry: The latest available figures are for May 1994. The numbers and percentages of dwellings in England in each valuation band are listed.

Valuation band	*Number of dwellings*	*Percentage*
A	5,326,406	26·3
B	3,888,174	19·2
C	4,408,430	21·8
D	2,950,065	14·6
E	1,819,759	9·0
F	970,612	4·8
G	735,148	3·6
H	117,278	0·6

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many people in England and Wales have had their council tax bill reduced *(a)* through a discount, *(b)* through the disability reduction scheme, *(c)* through the council tax benefit and *(d)* through the second adult rebate;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, for each collecting local authority in England and Wales, the latest figures available of the level of take-up of *(a)* the single person discount and *(b)* discounts excluding the single person discount.

Mr. Curry: Information on local authorities in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Information on numbers of people having a reduction in their council tax bill is not held centrally. The available information is as follows:

(a) the number of dwellings in England on 1 December 1993 subject to a single (25 per cent.) discount was 6,090,000. An additional 500,000 dwellings were subject to a double (50 per cent.) discount;

(b) 96,000 dwellings in England on 1 December 1993 were eligible for a reduction for disabled relief;

(c) the average caseload in England in 1993-94 for recipients of council tax benefit was 4,570,000—(*Source:* Department of Social Security);

(d) the average caseload in England in 1993-94 for recipients of second adult rebates was 43,000—(*Source:* Department of Social Security).

I have arranged for a table showing the number of council tax discounts for each local authority in England to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to aid local authorities in their promotion of the take-up by council tax payers of the various ways of reducing their council tax bills.

Mr. Curry: My Department and the Department of Social Security have produced a range of leaflets explaining entitlement to council tax discounts, exemptions and rebates. I am not aware that local authorities feel in need of further assistance.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to monitor local authorities' use of bailiffs to enforce council tax payments.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to do so. Local authorities normally use bailiffs only when other means of recovery, such as attachment of earnings and deductions from income support, have been unsuccessful or are inappropriate to the circumstances.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of properties within band A is valued at *(a)* £10,000 or less, *(b)* £10,000 to £19,999, *(c)* £20,000 to £29,999, or *(d)* £30,000 to £40,000.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not available. Valuations of dwellings for council tax are carried out in order to list them in the appropriate band. Precise values are not determined.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each collecting local authority in England and Wales the latest figures available of the level of use of distress to enforce council tax payments.

Mr. Curry: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing a requirement on local authorities to report on the remedies used to collect council tax debts once a liability order has been made.

Mr. Curry: My Department collects statistics on the number of liability orders obtained by local authorities in respect of council tax debts, but I have no plans to introduce a requirement for authorities to submit data on the precise method of recovery they use in each case. Having obtained a liability order, most authorities will apply an attachment of earnings if the person is working, or apply for deductions to be made direct from income support if this is appropriate. Where this is not possible, or other arrangements break down, the authority will normally seek to levy distress.

Parish Meetings

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of parish meetings in England and Wales; and what proportion of the total number of parish authorities this represents.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local education authority for each year since 1989-90 *(a)* the total revenue expenditure of the relevant council on all services, *(b)* the total revenue expenditure on all education services and *(c)* *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Baldry: I have arranged for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Water Seepage and Flood Damage

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints he has received with regard to water seepage and flooding from residents in Coventry; and what was their nature.

Mr. Atkins: No recent complaints of this kind can be traced.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the responsibilities of water authorities to the consumer for water seepage and flood damage and for the costs involved; and how the responsibility is determined.

Mr. Atkins: Water undertakers have the same responsibilities as anyone else under the law of torts for damage caused by water escaping from their mains and pipes. In addition, there are specific statutory obligations under section 209 of the Water Industry Act 1991, which generally makes water undertakers strictly liable for loss or damage caused by the escape of water from their pipes and under schedule 12 to that Act which imposes strict liability for, among other things, damage to land or buildings attributable to the exercise of water and sewerage undertakers' works powers. Compensation under schedule 12 is assessed by the lands tribunal or an arbitrator, according to the provision concerned: other claims are a matter for the ordinary courts.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the responsibilities of the regulator for the water industry in dealing with seepage and flooding and determination of responsibility in these matters.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General of Water Services has duties under the Water Industry Act 1991, among other things:

(a) to consider complaints by consumers that a water or sewerage undertaker is in breach of requirements enforceable under section 18 of that Act and, in appropriate circumstances, to take suitable enforcement action;

(b) to investigate complaints about water and sewerage undertakers' carrying out works on private land and, if appropriate, to award payments of up to £5,000 to the complainant for any failure, loss, damage or inconvenience;

(c) to investigate, either directly or through a customer service committee established by him, other complaints about water and sewerage undertakers' discharge of their functions, and to take such action as he thinks appropriate, including making representations to the company concerned.

Depending on their nature, complaints about seepage and flooding from the activities of water and sewerage undertakers could come under any of these arrangements.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure the proper co-ordination between the Severn Trent water authority and environmental health authorities in Coventry in dealing with water seepage resulting in flooding; and if he will investigate the methods used by the Severn Trent water authority for establishing the source of the seepage and flooding of the Wykes family home at 19 Lindley road, Coventry, and why they have failed to accept responsibility for dealing and establishing the source of the flooding.

Mr. Atkins: The Severn Trent water authority ceased to function on 31 August 1989. Responsibility for water supply and sewerage in Coventry now lies with Severn Trent Water Limited, a private-sector company. Co-ordination between that company and Coventry city council is a matter for those bodies. Statutory arrangements exist under the Director General of Water Services for investigating complaints by consumers against water and sewerage undertakers. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for the Secretary of State to intervene.

Elephants

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's current position towards a resumption of the inter-nation trade in elephant products;

(2) what steps Her Majesty's Government propose to take to encourage South Africa to withdraw its proposals to downlist the African elephant;

(3) if Her Majesty's Government intend to support the appendix 1 listing of all African elephant populations at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Specicies meeting to be held in November;

(4) what is the current position of Her Majesty's Government towards any resumption of the trade in ivory.

Mr. Atkins: At the last meeting of the conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora—CITES—in Kyoto in March 1992, the Government opposed proposals on the part of some southern African countries to resume trade in ivory and to downlist some African elephant populations from appendix I to appendix II.

As for the forthcoming meeting of the conference of the parties to be held in Fort Lauderdale in November, the Government have not yet reached any conclusions on the proposals tabled by South Africa and the Sudan. Before doing so, we wish to consider the report of the panel of experts, established by CITES, and to take account of reactions of other African elephant range states. The Government's overall position is that we would not support any change in the status of the African elephant under CITES, unless we were satisfied that this would not put at risk elephant populations in the country concerned or any other country.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the countries that have been

invited, and will be invited, to participate in the forthcoming meeting organised by the United Kingdom and designed to develop greater understanding between the range states, potential consumer states and other interested parties on the African elephant issue in the context of CITES.

Mr. Atkins: At the last meeting of the conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora—CITES—in Kyoto in March 1992, the then President of the EC Environment Council urged that there should be more intersessional dialogue between parties on controversial issues including that of the elephant and the rhino. Since then, the European Union has been exploring the possibility of such a dialogue between the main countries concerned with the status of the African elephant. After widespread consultation among African and other Governments, including an exploratory mission, the EU has concluded that there is an opportunity for such dialogue.

The meeting is being arranged in Botswana in September this year, and a list of those invited follows:

Africa

Botswana	Namibia
Burkina Faso	Nigeria
Cameroun	South Africa
Central African Republic	Sudan
Congo	Tanzania
Ethiopia	Togo
Gabon	Uganda
Ghana	Zaire
Kenya	Zambia
Malawi	Zimbabwe
Mali	

Rest of world

France	Germany
Japan	United Kingdom
United States of America	European Commission

In addition, representatives of CITES, the United Nations Environment Programme, the world conservation union—IUCN—and a small number of expert advisers have been invited.

The aim of the meeting is to exchange information and to discuss positions of the countries involved. It is not to make resolutions or to pre-empt discussions at the wider meeting of the CITES conference of the parties. The United Kingdom is taking the lead in organising the meeting, on behalf of the European Union and in consultation with the presidency.

Combustion Plants (Emissions)

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the operation of the United Kingdom national plan implementing the EC large combustion plants directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The sector emission limits specified in the national plan have consistently been observed. However, the Government keep the operation of the plan under review, in order to take account of changes in the pattern of industrial activity, the structure of industries and the pace of technological change and its effects on emissions. In the light of a recent review, and after consultation with the industries concerned, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has decided, in exercise of his powers under section 3(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to make a minor revision to the plan to allow a small increase in the sector limit for emissions of oxides of nitrogen, NO_x, from the refineries in England and Wales. The increase will be offset by an equivalent reduction in the NO_x sector limit for the electricity supply industry in England and Wales. There will thus be no increase in the overall sector limits for England and Wales. The revised figures are set out in the table.

Revised LCPD national plan NO[1] limits for England and Wales (in kilotonnes)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
National Power	418	401 (402)	386 (387)	369 (371)	354 (356)	340
Powergen	256	247	236 (237)	227 (228)	217 (218)	209
England and Wales Sub-total	674	648 (649)	622 (624)	596 (599)	571 (574)	549
Refineries	25	25 (24)	25 (23)	25 (22)	25 (22)	21

[1]The figures in the National Plan prior to the changes are shown in parentheses where any change has been made.

Sir Bedivere

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take with regard to the regeneration of north Tyneside following the decision on the Sir Bedivere contract.

Mr. Baldry: The Government fully appreciate the concern on Tyneside over the future of Swan Hunter following the decision on the Sir Bedivere refit. The receiver will wish to consider the position and I am asking the regional director of the Government Office for the north-east to contact him, the local authorities, Tyne and Wear development corporation, Tyneside training and enterprise council and other interested parties as a matter of urgency to discuss the next steps. I, as sponsor Minister for Tyne and Wear, will be on Tyneside this Friday and will be available to meet all the interested parties.

Horses

Mr. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's planning policy in relation to applications for horse-based development in the countryside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Development that supports the rural economy and maintains and enhances the countryside is to

be encouraged. Planning applications for development which is in accordance with the development plan shall be allowed unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Within this framework, the Government wish to see a positive approach towards planning applications for horse-based development. Paragraph 2.21 of planning policy guidance note 7 makes it clear that the keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes or as part of commercially based equestrian activities can help provide new opportunities for employment and land use in the countryside. Annexe F of the same document gives further guidance on development involving horses.

"Streamlining Planning"

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consultation paper, "Streamlining Planning".

Mr. Curry: I am pleased to announce today that we shall be taking forward proposals in the "Streamlining Planning" consultation paper to relax planning controls in respect of flats over shops; extensions to schools, colleges, universities and hospitals; flat advertisements at householders' sites and other advertisement controls. We shall also be abolishing the special industrial use classes, so that planning permission will not be required for changes between all general industrial uses within existing buildings.

Taken together, these reforms will represent a significant benefit to business without reducing protection for the environment of amenity. They will also help improve the overall efficiency of the planning system by relieving local authorities from determining some relatively minor planning applications.

These changes will apply equally in Wales.

Open Government

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish his scheme for charging for the release of information under the open government code of practice and to publish details of how his Department deals with the public.

Mr. Baldry: I have today made available guidance on the charging arrangements operating in my Department in respect of requests for information under the code of practice on access to Government information. I have also released an index to the explanatory material which is currently available on my Department's dealings with the public. The index contains details of how to obtain this material and will be updated at regular intervals. Copies of the index and charging arrangements have been placed in the Library of the House and are available from my Department's Libraries and from the Government Offices in the regions.

Coal Industry

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the coal industry in the context of the proposed reform of old minerals permissions he announced in March.

Mr. Baldry: When my Department published the consultation paper on the reform of old mineral permissions in March 1994 we said that coal was being considered separately.

We have completed that consideration and, in accordance with the Government's general policy that, for planning purposes, coal should be treated no differently from other minerals, the Government intend that the proposals in the consultation paper—all of which will require primary legislation—should apply equally to coal. This would mean that old coal mining permissions will be subject to initial updating of their conditions and thereafter all coal mining permissions would be subject to periodic review at 10-yearly intervals.

Such reviews should include ancillary mining development. However, as the consultation paper makes it clear, conditions imposed following a review should not fundamentally affect the economic structure of the operation.

As a consequence of coal privatisation the General Development Order is being revised to attach restoration conditions to surface development at GDO mines. The Government would not therefore expect GDO mines, which will only recently have had restoration conditions imposed on them as part of that process, to require immediate further review. They would be looked at again at the start of the second phase of the initial updating programme. The consultation proposals envisage that that second phase would commence three years after any new legislation had been brought into force. In practical terms this is likely to mean that GDO mines will be exempt from further review for at least five years.

Litter

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report of his Department's advisory group on litter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have today placed in the Library of the House a summary of the report of the advisory group on litter which has been reviewing the litter provisions contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and elsewhere. The group has concluded that overall the 1990 Act has made a significant effect but there are some areas of the legislation in England and Wales which could be usefully improved. The key recommendations of the advisory group are:

publication of information to inform the citizen about how their local authority plans to fulfil its litter duty;

improvements to the way in which litter on private land can be dealt with by local authorities;

improved powers to enable local authorities to target business or commercial activities which result in litter on adjacent public areas;

replacement of the existing patchwork of dog fouling byelaws with a national offence of failure to clear up after one's dog in most public areas;

improvements to the litter fixed penalty system so local authority contractors can, subject to certain safeguards, issue penalty notices and to allow extension of the fixed penalty system to dog fouling offences;

increasing the fixed penalty from £10 to £25 in line with the general increase in fine levels since the litter provisions were brought into effect.

The full report will be available on request from my Department.

I am grateful to the members of the advisory group for its work in producing this report. I am sure that there will be wide interest in these recommendations. In view of this, I am publishing the summary report as a consultation document. I would encourage all interested parties to let my Department have their views by 14 October 1994.

Wildlife Sales Controls

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of his review of wildlife sales controls in Great Britain.

Mr. Atkins: I announced the outcome of the first stage of the review on 25 April 1994. This focused mainly on changes in the bird registration system. The rest of the review covered a range of issues concerning secondary controls on native and exotic wildlife, and enforcement.

We plan to make some changes which should take effect from 1 October. These will simplify paper controls and improve enforcement. There are seven main elements:

(i) The Registered Sellers of Dead Birds—RSDB—scheme allows people, mainly taxidermists, registered with the Department to sell dead birds. In return for a triennial fee, registered sellers do not have to submit individual sales applications to the Department. However they are required to fix a marker to specimens and to keep records which are returned to the Department every six months. The scheme was intended to discourage the taking of birds from the wild for taxidermy and to allow people already legitimately trading in birds to continue to do so without the need to apply for individual sales licences. We believe that these objectives can be achieved more effectively by issuing a general licence allowing the sale of captive-bred and legally-taken dead birds. The wording of the licence would make it clear that sellers must be able to demonstrate conclusively that the legal requirements have been met. We shall be issuing a formal consultation letter shortly.

(ii) The Department issues about 2,500 individual sales licences each year to allow the sale of live or dead wildlife specimens, or parts thereof, for example where they have been bred in captivity or artificially propagated, or are needed for research. This means that substantial resources are being devoted to authorising legitimate activities which have little or no apparent effect on the conservation of the species concerned. We shall therefore be moving to a control system base on wider use of general sales licences which will enable us to operate more effective checks on specimens for which individual licences will continue to be required. The new system will rely on the increased use of DNA tests to check claims that specimens have been bred in captivity.

(iii) My Department has financed research on the use of DNA testing to identify the parentage of birds, and I shall place a copy of the results in the library of both Houses as soon as they are available. DNA tests have already been used in four recent and successful prosecutions, and further cases are in the pipeline. We shall be looking into the feasibility of extending the use of DNA testing where appropriate to help enforce controls on other endangered species.

(iv) Four amphibian species are subject to sales controls, but not a prohibition on the killing, injuring or taking of wild specimens, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981—the common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt. At present these species can be sold only if an individual licence has been issued or if the vendor has obtained a 'trader' licence. The reported level of trade in these species, which is in the low thousands, is unlikely to have a discernible effect on populations in the wild, which run into millions. We shall therefore be issuing a general licence for these four species, subject to conditions agreed with our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, restricing the times and locations when they can be collected. We shall also be asking the JNCC to look carefully at the effectiveness of sale-only controls in its next quinquennial review of schedules 5 and 8 of the Act.

(v) In the past, some species have been subject to sales controls under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. In many instances, these controls have been superseded by the EC CITES regulation or duplicated by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These controls have taken precedence and the sale of most of the small number of species remaining has been permitted under an open sales licence for some time. In December 1992, the then Minister, my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, announced that 200 additional species would be made subject to sales controls following the establishment of the single market. On further investigation we are not convinced that sale controls are an effective means of controlling trade in these species and we do not now propose to introduce these measures. Furthermore, we do not propose to add any new species to the Act for the purposes of sales controls unless our scientific advisers judge that an undesirable level of trade in any wide specimens of particular species is taking place.

(vi) We believe that there is room for improving controls on the import of CITES species. In particular, the Department will give greater emphasis to its powers to impose conditions on import permits and to ensure that conditions which have been imposed are complied with. Where an import of a CITES appendix I (or EC Regulation Annex C1) specimen is allowed only because of the purpose for which it will be used, for example for specific research or breeding projects, a condition will be imposed requiring prior authorisation from the Department before it is used for any other purpose. We will continue to make use of the provision to restrict the movement of a specimen from the address specified on the import permit. The Department's wildlife inspectors will carry out more inspections to ensure that specimens are used and kept as proposed.

(vii) The Department already monitors advertisements offering endangered species for sale in a range of specialist journals. More journals will be scrutinised and advertisements followed up; to guard against possible sale offences.

We also propose to make a number of changes which will take longer to implement. First, we will review our publicity on both primary and secondary controls, with a view to issuing additional material by March 1995. Secondly, we shall consider whether there is any scope for the conservation agencies assuming responsibility for some of the licensing controls currently operated by my Department. Thirdly, we will begin work to consider amending the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to exclude captive-bred birds and remove duplication with the EC CITES regulation.

These changes as a whole will reduce bureaucracy, and release resources to improve enforcement of the import and sales controls which protect genuinely endangered species. The additional enforcement measures I have described—more inspections, DNA tests, stricter import conditions and monitoring of advertisements—will be introduced by October this year.

We also recognise the scope for further improvements in enforcement and in the links between enforcement agencies. These need to be considered in detail with other interested groups, including the voluntary bodies. I therefore propose to establish an official level working group on enforcement involving relevant enforcement agencies and non-Governmental organisations. Its composition and detailed terms of reference will be announced shortly.

I have placed a paper giving more about these proposals and the background to them in the Libraries of both Houses in accordance with our commitment to open government.

Departmental Houses

Mr. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will respond to the report of the task force on Government Departments' empty houses; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that the final report of the task force on Government Departments' empty houses was published today, along with a Government response to its seven recommendations. A copy of both documents has been placed in the Library.

The Government welcome the task force's report and believe it has made a valuable contribution to making more effective use of empty residential Government properties. We will consider how the draft code of practice prepared by the task force to help achieve reductions in the number of empty properties can best be adopted by each relevant Government Department. I plan to circulate the code to local authority and housing association managers.

Where a residential property in an area of housing stress has stood empty for six months and no sale has taken place, the Government will implement the policy whereby sale or short-term leasing for social housing shall have priority. The Government also propose to set annual targets for empty residential property and to publish the Department's achievements at the end of each year.

Environment Agency

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the prepartions for the establishment of the new environment agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Good progress is being made in preparing and drafting the main legislation to establish the environment agencies for England and Wales and for Scotland, and I intend to publish relevant legislative provisions in draft before the end of the recess. In these circumstances, we have decided that it is no longer necessary to seek paving powers in the present Session.

I propose to establish a new advisory committee on arrangements for the proposed agency in England and Wales and to appoint to it persons who I hope will play a continuing role in overseeing the new body if Parliament approves the necessary legislation. I am planning on the basis that it will prove possible to establish the new agency during 1995 and incorporate the existing bodies into it at the beginning of the 1996-97 financial year.

I am today publishing the report on a study conducted for the Department by Touche Ross which considers potential models for the geographic and management structure of the environment agency and provides an initial assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Interested organisations have been invited to comment by 31 October. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to respond to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 17th report on incineration of waste.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have responded to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 17th report on incineration of waste today. Copies of the Government's response are available in the Library.

"The Royal Commission's support for incineration is based on the new generation of plant, which differs from the old in two important respects: first, provision will normally be made for electricity generation or combined heat and power, with the consequence that the process involves energy recovery and is therefore higher in the waste management hierarchy; second, the need to meet the new EC emission limits will provide much greater safeguards for health and local amenity.

"We agree with the Royal Commission that incineration of waste in suitably located plants designed to meet these new standards is an environmentally acceptable form of waste disposal and should no longer represent a cause for concern to those who live and work close to such plants. We agree also on the desirability of recovering energy from wastes as part of a sustainable approach to waste management.

"The Government will publish later this year, as a basis for consultation, a draft waste management strategy for England and Wales. This will set out in greater detail the potential role of incineration in relation to other waste management options."

Gosport Borough Council

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet considered the response by Gosport borough council to the notice served on the authority on 9 May under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has carefully considered the response of Gosport borough council to the notice which was served in respect of the award of a contract for other cleaning work to the authority's direct labour organisation. He accepts that the council may not have intended to act anti-competitively, but takes the view that the council's actions were likely to have the effect of restricting or distorting competition, and in the event did so. Consequently he has today given the authority a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988.

The direction requires the council to re-tender the relevant contract so that new arrangements are in place by 1 October 1995, and to seek my right hon. Friend's consent should they wish to re-assign the work to the in-house team.

The authority restricted competition in that, prior to the return of tenders, they asserted that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)—TUPE—Regulations would apply and decided to consider only TUPE-based bids. They also failed to provide tenderers with substantive details regarding the possible availability of depot space.

The Government will continue to act against councils whose actions amount to anti-competitive behaviour. We are determined to ensure that obstacles which stand in the way of full and fair competition are removed, so that taxpayers continue to get value for money for quality services.

Pollution

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government have taken since 1979, following the reduction and elimination of lead in petrol, to measure and record any significant increases in the quality and quantity of pollutants in the gases emitted from motor vehicles; and if he will publish the findings.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The Government have established an extensive air quality monitoring network to measure levels of transport-related air pollutants. Results are published in the Department of the Environment's annual "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", copies of which have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information the United Kingdom Government have formally supplied upon request from the European Commission as required by article 15.2(c), on the effect on the application of directive 85/210/EEC and the consequent introduction of low-lead—0·15g lead/l—and unleaded petrols into the 12 member states with particular reference to article 6 on the development of concentrations of polluting substitutes for lead in the atmosphere.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The Government have received no requests from the European Commission for information under these articles.

Air Quality

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans exist to promote greater public awareness of air quality levels in urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 July, *Official Report,* column *44.*

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Space Industries

20. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the funding provided for space activities through his Department for the exploitation by United Kingdom space industries of markets in telecommunications and earth observation.

Mr. McLoughlin: Funding for space activities, which is kept under constant review, is concentrated on the practical applications of space, and on enabling United Kingdom space industries to secure business advantage in both established markets such as telecommunications and the emerging markets for earth observation data.

Trade Associations

21. **Mr. Page:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications he has had with trade associations to ensure that they speak with a coherent voice in each industrial sector.

Mr. Heseltine: As I made clear in a speech on 17 June last year, I want to see trade associations that are powerful, effective and influential and which play a significant role in promoting the international competitiveness of their sectors. These views are shared by many industrialists, and I am pleased that trade associations in a number of sectors are now coming together.

Brewing Industry

22. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the director of the Office of Fair Trading to discuss the brewing industry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I meet the Director General of Fair Trading from time to time to discuss a wide range of competition issues. There have been no specific discussions on brewing recently. However, my officials are in regular and close contact with those at the Office of Fair Trading on this issue.

Social Chapter

23. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment has been made by his Department of the likely impact on British industry if the social chapter provisions were adopted.

35. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment has been made by his Department of the effect on British industry of the adoption of the provisions of the social chapter.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of Trade and Industry has made no such assessment but the Department of Employment produced cost estimates last year. I am arranging for these to be sent to my hon. Friend.

Post Office

24. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the Green Paper on its future.

Mr. Heseltine: I meet the chairman of the Post Office regularly, but no date has been set for our next meeting.

25. **Mr. Timms:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact of the cut in the post office users council budget on its service to Post Office business users and others.

38. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evaluation his Department has made of the impact of the cut in the post office users council budget on its service to post office domestic customers and others.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am confident the Post Office Users National Council will continue to fulfil its statutory functions to its users.

28. **Ms Corston:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what would be the cost of running Post Office Counters as a separate business.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) earlier today.

37. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received on the future of rural post offices and sub-post offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I have received a number of representations from individuals, companies and consumer organisations on the future of the Post Office. Some of these include views on rural post offices and sub-post offices.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will place in the Library the schedule of variable payments to sub-post offices and other post offices according to the volume of Department of Social Security transactions, together with the total number of transactions within each volume payment band;

(2) if he will place in the Library a memorandum explaining the internal cross-subsidy system from large-volume to small-volume post office outlets within Post Office Counters Ltd.; and what changes have been made in that system in the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, as part of his consultation on the Post Office Green Paper, he will place in the Library the 1991 strategic review of Royal Mail delivery and other services.

Mr. McLoughlin: No.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution was made to *(a)* external financing limit targets and *(b)* overall profits by each Post Office subsidiary over the last three years with an estimate for the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The external financing limit is a target which is set for the Post Office Group as a whole. The businesses are not given EFL contribution targets and, therefore, information is not collected or available on this basis.

The profits of the main Post Office businesses over the last three years are as follows:

£ million

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Royal Mail	266	252	296
Parcelforce	(24)	(13)	(19)
Post Office Counters Ltd.	26	25	25
Subscription Services Ltd.	7	8	6

It is not the Post Office board's policy to publish profit forecasts. The Post Office Group has been set a negative EFL for 1994-95 by the Government of £226 million.

Small Firms

26. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to assist small firms in obtaining long-term finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government firmly believe that finance for all businesses is a commercial matter for the banks and other financial institutions. However, where there are clearly identified gaps in provision, the Government intervene with measures such as the small firms loan guarantee scheme. We will continue to remind the banks and others of the need to provide more long-term finance for small businesses.

China

27. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy for promoting trade with China.

Mr. Needham: China, as the world's fastest-growing economy, is a major trade promotion priority for the DTI. Together with the China Britain Trade Group, we are implementing a strategy to ensure that British business is well placed to take maximum advantage of the opportunities in the market. This includes targeted geographical and sectoral initiatives and a wide range of high profile trade missions. I have made four trade promotion visits to China since July 1992 and hope to lead another team of senior business people there in October.

Manufactured Goods

29. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the balance of trade in manufactured goods *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: In 1979, the United Kingdom had a surplus of £2·7 billion—1·4 per cent. of GDP—in manufactured trade. In 1993, there was a deficit of £8·3 billion—1·3 per cent. of GDP.

Steel Industry

30. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the British Iron and Steel Producers Association to discuss prospects for the steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough, (Mrs. Jackson).

Competitiveness

31. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has had from companies to his White Paper on competitiveness.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer my hon. Friend to the response given to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) earlier today.

36. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to discuss the White Paper, "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My officials and I maintain close contact with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce on a wide range of issues, including competitiveness.

39. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the competitiveness of British industry and its export performance.

Mr. Needham: My officials and I maintain close contact with representatives from the CBI on a range of issues, including exports.

Energy and Telecommunications

32. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the prospects for the creation of a single market in energy and telecommunications in the light of the decisions of the Corfu European Council.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government welcome the Corfu European Council's call for the extension of the single market to telecommunications and energy. The Government's objective is to reach rapid agreement on the Commission's proposals for market opening in these sectors.

Coal Industry

33. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the prospects for involving the private sector in the United Kingdom coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: With the recent passing of the Coal Industry Act 1994 we are on course to privatise British Coal's coal mining assets by the end of the year. Twenty-six applicants have prequalified for one or more of the regional coal companies. In addition, nine collieries which were offered for lease/license by British Coal have now been taken over by the private sector. British Coal is also pressing ahead with plans for the disposal of a large number of its non-mining businesses.

Lloyd's

34. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next expects to meet the chairmen of Lloyd's to discuss arrangements to deal with past debts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no current plans to do so.

Business Confidence

40. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the implications for British industry of the Confederation of British Industry quarterly trend survey on business confidence.

Mr. Heseltine: CBI surveys continue to show that British manufacturers are increasingly confident about the future. Output expectations remain positive and total order books are at the highest level for five years. These results provide further evidence of the strength of recovery taking place throughout British industry.

Design Council

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the decision was taken that bids for separate parts of the Design Council's services should be invited; on what grounds that decision was taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department wrote to the Design Council on 20 June to say that all the proposals which had previously been submitted for the transfer of the Design Council's services to industry on an integrated basis would involve a significant and unacceptable subsidy from the Government. As a result of the failure of these proposals, the Department encouraged the Council to explore the best terms on which piecemeal disposal might be carried forward.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the support offered to the Design Council and the design museum in cash and real terms since 1989; and what provisions are made in the estimates for 1994-95.

Mr. McLoughlin: Offers of grant in aid for the Design Council in the financial years 1989-90 to 1994-95 were as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1989-90	6·271
1990-91	6·435
1991-92	6·775
1992-93	7·100
1993-94	7·500
1994-95	7·200

These amounts do not include free-standing contracts and funding for stand-alone activities and projects negotiated separately for, among other things, the enterprise initiative consultancy scheme, the materials information service and the "Managing in the '90s" programme. Nor do they include separate sums agreed for restructuring costs.

Offers of running cost support for the design museum were as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1989-90	0·300
1990-91	0·200
1991-92	0·150
1992-93	0·150
1993-94	—
1994-95	—

These amounts do not include free-standing contracts and funding for specific projects negotiated separately for design exhibitions and seminars at home and overseas.

The above amounts are in cash: figures in real terms since 1989 are not readily available.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether guidelines similar to the Overseas Development Administration good government criteria are applied in the offering of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover; and how much the ECGD liaises with the ODA on such issues.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, column *111*. ECGD liaises with ODA on cases where aid is involved and ODA's good government criteria are therefore relevant.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for Defence of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *168-69*, what was the size of the line of export credit to Jordan.

Mr. Needham: ECGD provided guarantees for export credit loans of up to £236 million for two defence lines of credit to Jordan, signed in 1986 and 1987 respectively, which could be used to support contracts totalling up to £310 million.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of ECGD's fixed-rate export finance scheme in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The cost of the scheme in each of the last five years was as follows, in round millions:

Year	£ million
1989-90	349
1990-91	413
1991-92	237
1992-93	111
1993-94	[1]Minus 53

[1] Provisional.

Inquiries

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of uses in each year of operation of *(a)* the environmental inquiry point and *(b)* the innovation inquiry line.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have nothing further to add to the reply given to the hon. Gentleman by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *250*.

South America

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies he has undertaken through his overseas project fund with Knight Piésold Consulting Engineers about increasing United Kingdom trade with South America.

Mr. Needham: The DTI has awarded to Knight Piésold one grant under the overseas projects fund. This was to assist with the costs of preparing a feasibility study. Details of these grants are commercially confidential. Where appropriate in accordance with scheme rules, grants are repaid.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to improve ECGD terms to South American countries.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 12 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *513-14*, about the credit cover given to Latin America by the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom's major industrial competitors.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we keep the terms and conditions of ECGD support under close review, to ensure that these are the best possible in the context of the prevailing economic and political conditions in each market.

Patent Office

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he has issued to the Comptroller General of the Patent Office about public comments on the future status of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The Government will make a statement when the current review of the Patent Office has been completed.

Gas Interconnector

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is his policy to construct an interconnector for gas between Britain and the continent of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The industry project to build a major grid-to-grid gas interconnector between Bacton and Zeebrugge would benefit the United Kingdom by contributing to the continued development of the United Kingdom continental shelf, and, by providing access to gas from other sources, thereby enhance security of supply.

British Coal

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what were the figures for British Coal stocks at each site in the United Kingdom in 1992, 1993 and at the latest available date;

(2) what was the percentage of British Coal stocks to output for each British Coal region in the United Kingdom in 1992, 1993 and the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards are in place during the sale of British Coal to prevent the future owners of the regional coal companies being disadvantaged in negotiations on future coal sale contracts by disclosure of confidential information to other bidders who have interests in power generation.

Mr. Eggar: All pre-qualifiers for the regional coal companies have signed strict confidentiality undertakings covering the disclosure or use of any information made available to them. Breach of those undertakings could lead to forfeit of their deposits, disqualification from the tender and, if appropriate, legal proceedings.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much and what percentage of British Coal's privatisation costs in 1993-94 were spent on consultants.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much his Department spent in 1993-94 on advice on coal privatisation by consultants.

Mr. Eggar: The Department's expenditure on coal privatisation consultants in 1993-94 was approximately £10·2 million, including VAT.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *602*, what consideration was given to including D65, textiles, D84, clothing; D67, iron and steel; D78.1, motor cars and parts; D87, scientific etc. instruments; D71, power-generating machinery etc; D72, specialised industrial machinery; D74, general industrial machinery; D75, office machines and ADP machines; D76, telecommunications etc. equipment; ex-SITC5, chemicals; and D66, non-metallic mineral manufactures among the principal import competing export industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Information on output of industries is available only according to the standard industrial classification and the reply was given on this basis. Each activity heading within manufacturing, as defined by the SIC, was considered.

The various divisions of the standard international trade classification listed in the present question are groups of products and not industries. Consequently no consideration was given to their inclusion.

Coal Authority

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the criteria which will be used to select members of the Coal Authority.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will, in accordance with the Coal Industry Act 1994, have regard to the desirability of appointing people with experience of, or who have shown capacity in, matters relevant to the Coal Authority's functions.

Investment Aid

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy in future to consult industry about the implications for existing companies prior to reaching conclusions about the award of investment aid to encourage overseas companies to open facilities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to consult directly with industry for reasons of commercial confidentiality in dealings with applicants. However, to be eligible for investment grants, projects must show they will bring a national economic benefit. Part of that test requires an assessment of the impact of the new investment on existing businesses.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to inform the House whenever his Department commissions consultations to consider the implications for existing companies of applications for inward investment aid; if he will ensure that the reports of such consultants are available to right hon. and hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not possible to provide this information.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether his Department relayed to the Northern Ireland Office the estimate of job losses provided by Sir David Alliance CBE to him at a meeting of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance on Monday 13 June and associated with the award of investment aid to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Northern Ireland Office has this information.

Electricity

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade by what authority and on the basis of what formula regional electricity companies are permitted to deduct from payments to the levy collector an amount equivalent to green ticket payments to Electricité de France.

Mr. Eggar: The Electricity Act 1989 provides for levy payments to the collector to be calculated by reference to the aggregate amount charged by each licensed electricity supplier for leviable electricity supplies only: "leviable electricity" excludes electricity which is generated by a non-fossil generating station that is not contracted within the NFFO.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps the Director General of Electricity Supply and the regional electricity companies are required to take to ensure power supplied by Electricité de France comes from non fossil-fuelled power stations.

Mr. Eggar: Regulations 8 and 12 of the Fossil Fuel Levy Regulations 1990 set out information that licensed electricity suppliers must provide to satisfy the Director General of Electricity Supply about the electricity that they supply, including non-leviable electricity.

Gas Supply

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what legislative proposals he will put forward in the next parliamentary Session to extend competition in the gas supply industry.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *23*.

Mobile Phones

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans his Department or OFTEL has to investigate the coupling of the sale of mobile phones with airtime agreements.

Mr. McLoughlin: Neither my Department nor OFTEL have any current plans to investigate the linking of the sale of mobile phones with airtime agreements. OFTEL's position is that packages linking handsets with airtime contracts are not unreasonable so long as a satisfactory range of alternatives is available. OFTEL is not aware of complaints that customers wishing to purchase handsets and airtime contracts separately are unable to do so.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the outcome of the application under section 279(3) of the Insolvency Act 1986 in the case of Mr. Asil Nadir, made by the official receiver.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The official receiver's application under section 279(3) of the Insolvency Act 1986 was heard on 1 July 1994. The court ordered that Mr. Nadir's bankruptcy should not be discharged until he complies with the following conditions:

that he disclose and deliver to the trustee of his estate all property and documents possessed or controlled by him;

that he provide the trustees with a full account of his business dealings, and all property and income to which he has become entitled since being made bankrupt;

that he do all that is reasonably required of him by the trustee to assist them in realising and getting in property belonging to him, whether it be in and out of this jurisdiction; and

that he fully comply with a number of orders made by the court which as at 1 July he had failed to do.

The order is subject to appeal.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what additional criteria his Department will take account of in considering applications for regional selective assistance.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. Any change in the criteria of the scheme would be announced before it is introduced.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been his response to the Warren Spring laboratory report on the compound hyperform—FXI—as a method of reducing exhaust emissions.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 July 1994]:* I understand that Warren Spring laboratory tested a compound called FX1 for a private company in 1993. It is not departmental policy to endorse or refute the claims made for particular commercial products.

Arms Sales

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those countries which do not need to produce *(a)* an end-user certificate and *(b)* an export licence when buying arms from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* Items subject to control under part III, group I of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994 require an export licence for all destinations. In considering export licence applications full information as to end use is always required and, depending on circumstances, this may take the form of an end-user certificate, letter of undertaking or a copy of an order or contract.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Child Care Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total public expenditure on child care services for pre-school children under the age of five years, by sector, including all local authority provisions and grants for the voluntary sector, for each year from 1989-90 to 1993-94; and what was the total public expenditure on their services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Northern Ireland in each of these years.

Mr. Ancram: The total expenditure borne by the Department of Health and Social Services and its sponsored bodies for the provision of child care services to pre-school children under the age of five years for each year from 1989-90 to 1992-93 is outlined in the table.

Total expenditure—pre-school children

£000

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Health Board expenditure				
Pre-school playgroups	407	415	359	239
Grants to voluntary organisations	1,314	1,211	1,238	1,663
	1,721	1,626	1,597	1,902
DHSS expenditure				
Grants to voluntary organisations	147	159	180	199
Total	1,868	1,785	1,777	2,101
Total expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product	0·02	0·02	0·02	n/a

Notes:
1. Financial data for the 1993-94 financial year is not yet available.
2. Gross domestic product figures for the 1992-93 year are not available.

Further Education

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total capital expenditure for minor and major works for each college of further education in Northern Ireland during each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram *[pursuant to his answer, 22 June 1994, c. 166]:* The figure spent in the Southern education and library board during 1992-93 on minor repairs was £150,000 and not £105,000 as originally answered.

War Veterans

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Thurrock in relation to the desire of Ards borough council to help fund the travel of war veterans to liberation celebrations in Belgium this autumn.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I wrote to the hon. Member on 19 July.

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what role will be played by his Department in any consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced the publication of a consultation document on 15 July. The consultation document extends to Northern Ireland and the relevant Northern Ireland Departments have contributed to its preparation.

Out-of-school Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total public expenditure on out-of-school services for children from the age of five for each year since 1989-90; and what was the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for Northern Ireland for each of these years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not available in the form requested.

The Department of Health and Social Services grant-aids the Northern Ireland Childminding Association, whose members can care for school age and pre-school children. Since 1989-90, funding has been as follows:

	£
1989-90	15,000
1990-91	24,000
1991-92	24,000
1992-93	31,000
1993-94	46,000

However, it is not possible to distinguish an out-of-school element in this support.

In addition, in 1992-93 Northern Ireland's health and personal social services boards spent £1·7 million on family day centres, which provide a specialist support service to families at risk. These centres also provide specialist services for other families in the community. Again it is not possible to distinguish an out-of-school element in this expenditure.

Water Services

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what study his Department has made on the reform of charging for water services; which other organisations his Department has consulted relating to privatising the water services industry in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what preparations his Department is making to carry out preparatory work on the reform of charging for water services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: Options for new charging arrangements for water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland are being examined and I intend to publish a policy document in advance of the introduction of new arrangements.

Discussions have taken place about water privatisation with elected representatives, district councils and representatives of interested groups. Water privatisation will require legislation and the proposal for a draft order will be published for consultation.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress his Department has made towards the development of a private finance strategy and programme for the water services industry in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: As I announced on 30 March 1994, *Official Report*, columns *836-37*, consultants have been appointed to carry out a study into the scope for attracting private sector finance to the Department of the Environment's water and sewerage construction programme. The consultant's report will be available very soon and it will form the basis for deciding how the private finance initiative is to be taken forward.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made with the Price Waterhouse study announced on 30 March into the scope for attracting private sector finance to the water and sewerage construction and improvement programme in Northern Ireland; if he intends to make the report public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The feasibility study commenced in April 1994 and a report is expected before the end of July 1994. The study was commissioned on a confidential basis because of commercial sensitivities of the issues involved. I have no plans to publish the report.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent consecutively in each of the last three years on agency fees in preparation for the privatisation of the water services industry in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The following sums have been paid in each of the last three years to consultants and other non-Government organisations for preparations related to the privatisation of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland:

	£ million
1991-92	Nil
1992-93	1·8
1993-94	1·9

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received concerning disconnections of domestic water supply.

Mr. Tim Smith: Representations have been received from 23 individuals and 21 groups arguing against water companies having the power to disconnect domestic supplies when water and sewerage services are privatised in Northern Ireland. These concerns will be taken into consideration in determining new charging arrangements for water and sewerage services.

All-Ireland Occupational Health and Safety Institute

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy in respect of the establishment of an all-Ireland occupational health and safety institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: While I support cross-border co-operation in areas where substantial benefits can be achieved for both parts of the island, the viability of an all-Ireland occupational health and safety institute, from a Northern Ireland perspective, would be heavily dependent on the extent to which it could attract local support for its services and the degree to which its activities would be self-financing.

Compensation Agency

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has begun the triennial review of the Compensation Agency.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: A review of the agency status of the Compensation Agency has commenced. The performance of the Compensation Agency will be evaluated, and a prior options review of its activities will be carried out.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(3) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: One special adviser has joined the Northern Ireland Office in the last five years. He was appointed in December 1991, resigned in March 1992 and was re-appointed as my special adviser in June 1992. There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Right to Buy

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many homes have been sold under the right-to-buy legislation in each year since its introduction; and what was the number of public sector housing starts in each of those years.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive operates a scheme for the sale of its houses to secure tenants which mirrors the statutory right-to-buy scheme operating in England and Wales. The chief executive has advised me that house sales under the scheme, together with the number of new build starts, are as follows:

Year	*Dwellings sold*	*New build starts*
1980-81	1,994	1,244
1981-82	7,042	4,680
1982-83	5,554	3,947
1983-84	5,440	3,705
1984-85	5,422	2,430
1985-86	4,103	1,508
1986-87	3,184	1,675
1987-88	2,807	1,633
1988-89	3,368	1,554
1989-90	4,638	1,405
1990-91	4,092	1,007
1991-92	3,191	814
1992-93	3,228	1,005
1993-94	3,972	1,064
Total	58,035	27,671

Investment Aid

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answers of 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, if he will identify the leading independent internationally recognised consultants from whom he sought advice in connection with the implications for existing companies prior to reaching conculsions about the award of investment aid to encourage the opening of new facilities in Northern Ireland by the Hualon Corporation; what was the cost of that advice; if he will arrange for a copy of the advice to be made available in the Library; what was the basis upon which the consultants were appointed; what steps were taken to ensure that they had no conflict of interest with other clients; what procedures are adopted in commissioning such consultants; by whom the appointment was made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The international consultants were Kurt Salmon Associates.

KSA conducted a detailed and comprehensive appraisal of the Hualon project—including technical, production and market aspects—and it is not possible to isolate the cost of the advice relating solely to the implications for existing companies.

The KSA report contains commercially confidential information and therefore will not be made available in the Library.

The consultants were appointed on the basis of their international reputation and specialist expertise within the global textile industry.

It is the established code of practice among major international consultancy firms to declare any potential conflict of interest prior to taking on any assignment. No such conflict of interest was declared by KSA prior to accepting the Hualon assignment.

In commissioning such consultants due weight is given to the extent and availability of their expert resources, their track record and their international standing.

KSA was selected and appointed by the Industrial Develpment Board from an internal register of specialist consultants.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answers of 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, how much money is being made available, and when, to the Hualon Corporation in the form of inward investment and other incentives to encourage it to proceed with plans to open a new facility in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Total selective financial assistance offered towards the establishment of the Hualon textile plant is approximately £61 million. It will be paid out over a 10-year period as the project proceeds through its four phases, mainly in the form of grants towards capital expenditure on buildings, plant and machinery.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations his Department has received concerning estimated job losses associated with the award of investment aid to the Hualon Corporation in connection with the development of new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: My Department has received two representations concerning potential job losses as a consequence of the Hualon project.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answers of 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, if he will now make it his policy in future to consult industry both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom about the implications for existing companies prior to reaching conclusions about the award of investment aid to encourage the opening of new facilities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: In reaching any decision to offer assistance to encourage new investment in Northern Ireland my Department is required to consider carefully the implications for existing companies both in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom. My Department does not consult industry or companies about such decisions and will not do so in future. This policy is

the same as that applied in other parts of the United Kingdom where regional assistance is available and I see no reason to change this policy.

Deregulation

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's contribution to the deregulation programme.

Mr. Tim Smith: Northern Ireland Departments are playing a full part in the deregulation initiative and have already made significant progress in the following areas:

(i) *Enforcement Codes*
Twenty three Enforcement Bodies in Northern Ireland have produced codes of practice outlining in simple language the standards of service businesses should expect from them and detailing clear complaints procedures in the event of dissatisfaction with the service received.

(ii) *Review of "Non-parity" Legislation*
A review has been conducted of the 30 items of legislation unique to Northern Ireland which impact on business. As a result of this review, it was decided to revoke five of these items.

(iii) *Deregulation and Contracting-Out Bill*
The Deregulation and Contracting-Out Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament, includes four specific measures which have been extended to Northern Ireland.
The remaining measures in the Bill which require action in Northern Ireland will be contained in a composite Northern Ireland Deregulation and Contracting-Out Order-in-Council.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sites of special scientific interest are listed in Northern Ireland, giving in each case their location and indicating which are at risk from proposed developments.

Mr. Tim Smith: There are currently 55 areas of special scientific interest in Northern Ireland; a list of them, with locations, has been placed in the Library.

It is believed that no areas of special scientific interest are threatened by development at this time.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards the establishment of an environmental protection agency in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: In Northern Ireland most of the functions of the proposed agency in England and Wales are already carried out by one body, the Environment Service of the Department of the Environment. I will decide whether or not any proposals for change in Northern Ireland should be made when final details of the proposed agency in England and Wales are known and when I have received the results of the prior options study of the Environment Service which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on 18 January 1994.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards the Government's target of recycling 25 per cent. of reusable household waste.

Mr. Tim Smith: Information on the volume of recyclable material collected in Northern Ireland is not held centrally. The recyclable materials most commonly collected in Northern Ireland are wastepaper; glass; aluminium cans; oil. Collection facilities are based mainly on "bring" centres. Under new legislation currently being prepared district councils will be required to prepare recycling plans for their districts.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from United Kingdom or foreign non-governmental organisations concerning the environmental risks of THORP.

Mr. Tim Smith: None. Responsibility for the regulation of the THORP plant rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Gas Pipes

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what agency or department owns the remnant gas pipe network in Derry city; and what departments or agencies have responsibilities relating to its maintenance adaptation or disposal.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Londonderry Gaslight Company, which formerly owned the underground gas pipes, was wound up on 14 July 1993 and dissolved on 14 October 1993. Ownership of the underground gas pipes is currently under legal consideration.

Science and Watercourse Management Division

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will make a statement about possible executive agency status for the science and watercourse management division of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have decided that the science service and the watercourse management division of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland should be considered as candidates for executive agency status, under the next steps initiative. Prior options studies will be undertaken to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. I would welcome comments from interested parties.

Comments on the Veterinary Sciences Division should be sent to:

The Secretary
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
Veterinary Sciences Division
Stoney Road
Belfast BT4 3SD

Comments on Watercourse Management Division should be sent by 1 September to:

The Secretary
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
Watercourse Management Division
Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast BT8 4RP

Mentally Infirm People

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the admission policy in each health board area in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* the elderly mentally infirm and *(b)* Alzheimer's disease sufferers.

Mr. Ancram: Information on admission policy in each health board area in Northern Ireland in respect of *(a)* elderly mentally infirm and *(b)* people with Alzheimer's disease is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In general terms, admission to hospital, residential homes and nursing homes will be based on clinical judgment, multi-disciplinary assessment of the individual's need and the availability of appropriate services.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many patients in the Northern health board area in each of the last three years have been assessed as requiring EMI—elderly mentally infirm—nursing care; and how many have been placed in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes;

(2) how many patients suffering from dementia are presently placed in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes in each health board area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for membership of the RUC were made in each year since 1983; from which community they came; and how many from each community were recruited.

Sir John Wheeler: Information is not available prior to 1990.

Available information is as follows:

Recruiting statistics—RUC

	Total	*CB1*	*CB2*	*CB3*	*CB1. Per cent.*	*CB2 Per cent.*	*CB3 Per cent.*
1990 Applications	1,113	842	116	155	75·65	10·42	13·93
1990 Intakes	182	159	13	10	87·36	7·14	5·49
1991 Applications	1,704	1,313	191	200	77·05	11·21	11·74
1991 Intakes	180	156	17	7	86·67	9·44	3·89
1992 Applications	2,317	1,716	231	370	74·06	9·97	15·97
1992 Intakes	421	368	39	14	87·41	9·26	3·33
1993 Applications	733	518	86	129	70·67	11·73	17·60
1993 Intakes	207	165	14	28	79·71	6·76	13·53

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the goals and timetables set for the RUC and the RUC Reserve under section 31 of the Fair Employment Act; and what success the RUC and the RUC Reserve have had in achieving them.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* I understand that the RUC has no plans to publish the goals and timetables set for the RUC and the RUC Reserve under section 31 of the Fair Employment Act 1989, or to report on the success they have had in achieving them. A copy of the review prepared by the RUC under section 31 of the Act has been made available to the Fair Employment Commission.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the percentage make-up and absolute number of the RUC and RUC Reserve perceived by religious affiliation for each year since 1983;

(2) what is the absolute and percentage numbers by perceived religious affiliation in each rank of the RUC and the RUC Reserve to the latest convenient date and each year since 1983.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* This information is not available prior to 1990. Available information is as follows:

Table 1: Royal Ulster Constabulary
RUC By Rank and Perceived Religious Affiliation 1990-1993

Rank	*Community Background CB1*	*CB2*	*CB3*	*Total*	*CB1 Per cent.*	*CB2 Per cent.*	*CB3 Per cent.*
1990							
Chief Officers	10	3	1	14	71·4	21·4	7·1
Chief Superintendent	35	8	1	44	79·5	18·2	2·3
Superintendent	104	17	2	123	84·6	13·8	1·6
Chief Inspector	135	22	4	161	83·9	13·7	2·4
Inspector	421	43	17	481	87·5	8·9	3·5
Sergeant	1,213	119	30	1,362	89·1	8·7	2·2
Constable	5,445	427	186	6,058	89·9	7·0	3·1
Total	7,363	639	241	8,243	—	—	—
CB as Percentage of Total	89·32	7·75	2·92	—	—	—	—
1991							

Rank	Community Background CB1	CB2	CB3	Total	CB1 Per cent.	CB2 Per cent.	CB3 Per cent.
Chief Officers	10	3	1	14	71·4	21·4	7·1
Chief Superintendent	36	7	1	44	81·8	15·9	2·3
Superintendent	103	16	0	110	86·6	13·4	0·0
Chief Inspector	139	20	4	163	85·3	12·3	2·4
Inspector	422	42	18	482	87·5	8·7	3·7
Sergeant	1,228	124	28	1,380	89·0	9·0	2·0
Constable	5,407	423	190	6,020	89·8	7·0	3·2
Total	7,345	635	242	8,222	—	—	—
CB as Percentage of Total	89·33	7·72	2·94	—	—	—	—
1992							
Chief Officers	11	2	1	14	78·6	14·3	7·1
Chief Superintendent	35	6	1	42	83·3	14·3	2·4
Superintendent	104	17	1	122	85·2	13·9	0·9
Chief Inspector	139	20	4	163	85·3	12·3	2·4
Inspector	426	47	17	490	86·9	9·6	3·5
Sergeant	1,250	123	24	1,397	89·5	8·8	1·7
Constable	5,617	456	182	6,255	89·8	7·3	2·9
Total	7,582	671	230	8,483	—	—	—
CB as Percentage of Total	89·38	7·91	2·71	—	—	—	—
1993							
Chief Officers	10	1	1	12	83·3	8·3	8·3
Chief Superintendent	34	7	1	42	80·9	16·7	2·4
Superintendent	103	17	3	123	83·7	13·8	2·4
Chief Inspector	140	22	2	164	85·4	13·4	1·2
Inspector	427	45	17	489	87·3	9·2	3·5
Sergeant	1,261	123	24	1,408	89·6	8·7	1·7
Constable	5,575	454	203	6,232	89·4	7·3	3·3
Total	7,550	669	251	8,470	—	—	—
CB as Percentage of Total	89·14	7·90	2·96	—	—	—	—

Table 2: RUC Reserve (Full Time)

Community background	Full time reserve	CB as percentage of total
1990		
CB1	2,699	90·27
CB2	163	5·45
CB3	128	4·28
Total	2,990	
1991		
CB1	2,731	89·78
CB2	177	5·82
CB3	134	4·40
Total	3,042	
1992		
CB1	2,817	89·15
CB2	192	6·07
CB3	151	4·78
Total	3,160	
1993		
CB1	2,822	88·60
CB2	200	6·28
CB3	163	5·12
Total	3,185	

Table 3: RUC Reserve (Part Time)

Community background	Part time reserve	CB as percentage of total
1990		
CB1	1,479	95·05
CB2	61	3·92
CB3	16	1·03
Total	1,556	
1991		
CB1	1,440	94·92
CB2	62	4·09
CB3	15	0·99
Total	1,517	
1992		
CB1	1,360	94·97
CB2	56	3·91
CB3	16	1·12
Total	1,432	
1993		
CB1	1,320	95·03
CB2	52	3·74
CB3	17	1·22
Total	1,389	

Note:
CB1—Perceived Protestant Community.
CB2—Perceived Roman Catholic Community.
CB3—Other.
All statistics are compiled as at end of year.
The RUC Reserve consists only of Constables.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, columns *589-90*, which company was finally awarded the contract; which company was originally recommended by officials; and what were the reasons for giving a direction.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 18 July 1994]:* The criteria for awarding public service contracts include such aspects as value for money, price and quality. Although officials had recommended that the contract in question be awarded to a previous contractor to the Northern Ireland civil service on the basis of, among other relevant criteria, a highly satisfactory performance, the Minister directed that it be awarded to a new contractor, Mount Charles Catering Ltd., on the determining factor of lowest cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of licensed mink farms in *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1974, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1994.

Mr. Soames: Information is readily available only from 1989. At 31 March 1989 there were 52 mink farms in England; at 31 March 1994 there were 12.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will show the estimated number of arctic fox fur farms in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1974, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1994.

Mr. Soames: The keeping of arctic fox is not subject to control in England, Wales and Scotland and information is not collected on the number of farms keeping this animal. In Northern Ireland, the keeping of arctic foxes is subject to licensing under the Arctic Fox (Importation and Keeping) Regulations 1988. No licences have been issued in Northern Ireland to keep this animal since the regulations came into force and information on the number of farms was not collected prior to the legislation being introduced.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to her answer of 13 July, when it became Ministry policy not to discuss details of licences of mink farms; why this decision was taken; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: It has been Ministry policy over a number of years not to disclose details of licences of individual mink farms; this is to protect mink fur farmers from the attentions of individuals or organisations who might seek to disrupt by unlawful means the activity of licensed fur farming.

Durum Wheat, Italy

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *656* about durum wheat, if she will make it her policy to gather information about the durum wheat areas measured by remote sensing in Italy and the action taken by the Italian authorities.

Mr. Jack: Responsibility for ensuring that member states fulfil their obligations to prevent fraud rests with the European Commission. The Ministry does not have the resources to monitor the level of compliance in other member states.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are taken to ensure that market traders and slaughterers make sure that farmers declare whether their cattle come from a BSE-infected herd.

Mr. Soames: Responsibility for checking that animals presented for slaughter and intended for the production of bone-in beef for intra-Community trade are accompanied by declarations confirming that they do not originate from BSE-infected premises rests with the slaughterhouse operator. The health certification for bone-in beef which must accompany such consignments cannot be completed by the official veterinarian unless such a declaration has been seen. As far as the export of live calves to EC member states is concerned, it is the responsibility of the official veterinarian completing export health certification to ensure that, for each of the animals being exported, an owner's declaration has been received confirming, inter alia, that the animal is not the progeny of a dam in which BSE is suspected or has been officially confirmed. Where calves for export are sold through a market the official veterinarian must be in receipt of such declarations for each calf or, alternatively, a declaration from the auctioneer confirming that the required owner's declarations for all the animals to be exported have been received and retained. In addition, computer checks are carried out on the validity of owner or auctioneer declarations.

Rabbit Control

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will set out the areas of research funded by her Department with regard to establishing cost-effective and humane rabbit control.

Mr. Soames: Listed are the research projects currently funded by the Ministry on the control of rabbits by non-lethal means:

1. Predicting damage to winter wheat in relation to the density of rabbits and the timing of population control.
2. Developing humane, environmentally acceptable and cost-effective techniques for reducing rabbit numbers or otherwise preventing crop damage.
3. Modelling rabbit populations and designing control packages.
4. Irreversible immunocontraception for the control of wild rabbits.
5. The management of mammal pests in farm woodlands.

The Forestry Commission is carrying out research on the use of tree guards against rabbits.

Herbal Products

Mr. Cash: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will make it her policy in future not to introduce bans on herbal products, whether voluntary or compulsory, without first consulting the House.

Mr. Soames: Compulsory bans on foodstuffs can be made by means of orders under existing legislation. Such

orders must be approved by Parliament. Voluntary bans on foodstuffs do not have the force of law and are not therefore appropriate for clearance by Parliament.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for how many years since 1964 comfrey products have been consumed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: Consumers have been free to choose to consume comfrey products since they have existed. Since March 1993 there has been a voluntary trade withdrawal of certain comfrey products because of their potential to give a high intake of toxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids. If consumers wish to continue consuming comfrey they may do so in the form of tea made from comfrey leaves as such products were not part of the voluntary withdrawal.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to harmonise animal welfare standards of the remaining European Union countries with British standards; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Government are pressing for the adoption of high welfare standards throughout the European Union. The arguments put by my right hon. Friend to the June Council of Ministers for improvements to the proposed rules on animal transport are a case in point.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many special advisers who left her Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if she will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left her Department in each of the last five years

Mr. Jack: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left her Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The number of special advisers who have joined or left the Department in the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Joined*	*Left*
1990	1	1
1991	—	—
1992	—	—
1993	2	1
1994	—	1

Commissions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many commissions her Department had with the Agriculture and Food Research Council for each year since 1979; how many such commissions she expects to make this year; and what is the value of those commissions in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department has issued a single commission for its research and development programme with the Agriculture and Food Research Council covering all its institutes each year. Details of the amounts spent in cash and constant prices are as follows:

Year	*Cash* £ *million*	*Constant Prices*[1] £ *million*
1979-80	30·4	72·4
1980-81	37·4	75·2
1981-82	44·3	81·3
1982-83	48·6	83·2
1983-84	51·3	84·0
1984-85	52·8	82·3
1985-86	51·8	76·5
1986-87	47·9	68·7
1987-88	44·2	60·2
1988-89	46·4	59·2
1989-90	46·0	54·9
1990-91	45·6	50·3
1991-92	34·5	35·8
1992-93	34·8	34·8
1993-94	36·0	34·8
To date, the value of the MAFF Commission with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council for 1994-95 in cash and constant prices is	32·7	30·4

[1] using the GDP deflator (1992-93=100)

Institute of Food Research

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure on the Institute of Food Research for each year since 1986 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on MAFF funding of research and development at the Institute of Food Research for each year since 1986 in cash and constant prices is as follows:

Year	*Cash* £ *million*	[1]*Constant Prices* £ *million*
1986-87	7·6	10·9
1987-88	7·5	10·3
1988-89	8·0	10·2
1989-90	7·7	9·1
1990-91	7·0	7·8
1991-92	5·8	6·0
1992-93	6·1	6·1
1993-94	5·8	5·6

[1]Using the GDP deflator (1992-93=100).

Veterinary Service

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures available for the number of vets employed by the State Veterinary Service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of veterinary surgeons employed by the state veterinary service as at 1 June 1994 was 403. This figure includes veterinary staff at Tolworth HQ.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current number of veterinary investigation centres in operation; what plans there are to develop these centres; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are currently 13 veterinary investigation centres and one veterinary investigation unit in operation in England and Wales. Last year two new purpose-built centres were opened at Bury St. Edmunds and at Luddington in Warwickshire. Major redevelopments have been carried out at a number of the centres and final plans are now being prepared for major redevelopment at Penrith and Thirsk veterinary investigation centres.

Resrarch and Developmentent

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current number of personnel employed in her Department's research and development programme; and what were the figures for each year from 1979-80.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The numbers of personnel employed by my Department in its research and development programme are as follows:

	Number
1984-85	2,264
1985-86	2,062
1986-87	1,924
1987-88	1,919
1988-89	2,201
1989-90	1,801
1990-91	2,514
1991-92	2,420
1992-93	2,552
[1]1993-94	2,575

[1] Provisional figure.

Figures include personnel at MAFF agencies and non-departmental public bodies.

Figures prior to 1984 are not available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been her Department's total research and development expenditure for each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant terms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department's total research and development expenditure for each year since 1981-82 in cash and constant prices is as follows:

Year	*Cash £ million*	*Constant prices[1] £ million*
1981-82	106·8	195·9
1982-83	113·9	195·0
1983-84	118·6	194·1
1984-85	119·4	186·1
1985-86	118·4	174·8
1986-87	118·3	169·7
1987-88	113·8	155·0
1988-89	115·0	146·8
1989-90	112·2	133·9
1990-91	119·1	131·5
1991-92	121·5	126·2
1992-93	132·9	132·9
[2]1993-94	137·3	132·9

[1] Using the GDP deflator (1992-93 = 100).
[2] Provisional.

Figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not available.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the allocated budget for the environmentally sensitive area schemes in England and Wales for each year since 1989.

Mr. Jack: The provision for environmentally sensitive areas in England and Wales at the beginning of each financial year since 1989 is as follows:

	England	*Wales*
1988-89	8,300	1,025
1989-90	8,430	1,000
1990-91	7,850	1,700
1991-92	8,687	1,700
1992-93	21,442	4,533
1993-94	30,200	5,787
1994-95	31,234	6,863

Wheat Yields

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the wheat yields for each county in England in 1986 to 1992, sorted by seven-year average, according to the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service study received by her Department in January 1993.

Mr. Jack: The average wheat yield for each county in England for 1986 to 1992 including the seven-year average, as presented in the ADAS study, is given in the table.

These figures are derived from the annual cereals production survey—CPS—which samples about 3,000 cereal growers. However the CPS is not designed to produce reliable estimates of county yields, and in some counties with few cereal growers the sample size may be very small. Yields also tend to be more variable within counties than between counties. The figures at county level, therefore, cannot be regarded as entirely reliable.

Wheat yields in England 1986-92 (by county)

County	1986 harvest	1987 harvest	1988 harvest	1989 harvest	1990 harvest	1991 harvest	1992 harvest	7 year average
Greater London (SE)	4·38	4·61	4·80	5·98	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·94
West Midlands	5·43	5·27	n/a	3·64	5·52	6·65	6·49	5·50
Surrey	6·17	5·56	5·57	5·15	6·92	5·86	5·50	5·82
Lancashire	5·61	4·64	5·39	4·62	6·52	6·68	6·74	5·74
Devon	6·23	6·24	5·88	6·39	6·57	6·21	5·81	6·19
Greater London (E)	4·12	n/a	5·00	6·16	n/a	6·71	n/a	5·50
Buckinghamshire	6·73	5·31	5·62	5·81	6·37	6·60	6·00	6·06
Gloucestershire	6·54	6·10	5·95	5·12	5·61	5·72	6·20	6·03
Cornwall	5·70	5·87	6·15	6·85	6·18	6·34	5·99	6·16
Berkshire	6·87	5·80	6·03	5·87	5·76	6·48	5·95	6·11
East Sussex	6·18	5·82	6·32	6·33	6·58	5·65	6·56	6·20
Avon	6·12	6·11	6·33	5·77	6·61	6·23	6·24	6·20
Cumbria	7·10	6·39	5·55	4·59	8·52	5·80	6·42	6·34
Greater Manchester	8·55	n/a	5·73	5·00	5·47	6·81	6·46	6·34
Staffordshire	6·87	6·25	5·94	5·82	6·66	7·52	6·50	6·51
Merseyside	6·80	5·81	6·59	5·71	6·06	6·91	6·02	6·27
Derbyshire	6·76	6·16	5·77	5·79	6·42	7·11	6·20	6·32
Hertfordshire	6·15	5·57	5·78	6·77	6·17	7·05	6·21	6·24
Bedfordshire	7·04	5·48	5·66	6·23	6·15	7·46	6·29	6·33
Leicestershire	7·16	5·74	6·22	6·44	6·18	7·40	6·27	6·49
Tyne and Wear	6·53	5·51	5·55	4·74	8·01	7·26	7·70	6·47
Nottinghamshire	7·07	6·25	5·63	6·68	6·57	7·15	6·23	6·51
Warwickshire	6·65	5·83	6·06	6·10	6·28	7·56	6·63	6·44
Oxfordshire	6·79	6·00	6·04	6·32	5·89	6·72	6·43	6·31
Northamptonshire	6·86	5·76	5·99	6·93	6·59	7·46	6·52	6·59
Wiltshire	6·64	6·32	6·26	6·42	6·48	6·88	5·84	6·41
Isle of Wight	7·80	6·98	6·08	6·02	5·19	7·27	5·94	6·47
Hereford and Worcester	6·92	6·16	6·48	5·86	6·37	7·38	6·79	6·57
Shropshire	7·00	6·31	6·62	5·95	6·79	7·67	6·78	6·73
Cheshire	6·55	5·68	6·62	6·07	5·77	7·84	7·26	6·54
South Yorkshire	6·98	6·17	6·41	6·57	6·72	7·68	6·46	6·71
Kent	6·84	5·96	7·20	6·75	7·06	6·52	7·24	6·80
Dorset	6·72	6·54	6·68	7·12	6·62	6·45	6·29	6·63
Hampshire	7·05	6·08	6·36	6·48	6·55	6·45	6·89	6·52
Somerset	7·07	6·89	5·71	6·25	6·67	6·87	6·40	6·52
West Yorkshire	6·78	6·46	6·24	6·86	6·47	7·25	7·11	6·74
West Sussex	6·69	6·25	6·85	6·55	7·40	6·14	6·50	6·63
Cambridgeshire	6·72	5·84	6·16	6·86	7·22	7·21	6·76	6·68
North Yorkshire (Northallerton)	7·41	6·15	6·56	6·76	7·49	7·56	7·35	7·04
Cleveland	6·93	5·78	6·34	6·58	7·85	8·21	7·61	7·04
Essex	6·88	5·68	6·38	6·63	7·10	7·58	7·08	6·76
Durham	7·17	5·97	6·87	6·14	7·87	7·32	7·69	7·01
North Yorkshire (Beverley)	7·62	6·21	6·00	7·11	7·87	7·86	7·12	7·11
Northumberland	6·87	6·61	6·55	6·80	8·18	7·90	8·15	7·30
Lincolnshire	7·45	6·14	6·37	7·58	7·34	7·91	7·10	7·13
Norfolk	7·02	5·99	6·35	7·73	7·85	7·68	7·38	7·14
Suffolk	6·92	5·52	6·40	7·45	7·86	7·42	7·52	7·01
Humberside	7·72	6·77	7·22	7·58	8·11	8·20	7·47	7·58

Trees

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will show for each of the last three years the area planted with *(a)* conifers and *(b)* broad leaf trees under each scheme for private planting and indicate the average area of each scheme for (i) conifers and (ii) broad leaves.

Mr. Jack: The information for England is set out in the table.

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Area Planted (hectares)			
Conifer	2,143	2,097	2,052
Broadleaf	5,865	6,766	8,144
Total	8,008	8,863	10,196
Average Area Approved (hectares)			
Conifer	1·3	2·2	2·6
Broadleaf	2·0	3·2	3·0

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average yield used for the purpose of arable area payments for farmers for harvest year 1993-94; and how it was calculated.

Mr. Jack: As required by EC Council regulation 1765/92 the average yield figures for England are calculated on the basis of the historical average cereal and oilseed yields from 1986-87 to 1990-91, excluding the highest and lowest years during that period. The cereal yields determine the cereals, protein and set-aside payments, and the threshold for the simplified scheme. The oilseed yields determine the oilseed payment rate. The average yield figure for cereals used to calculate arable area payments in England is 5·93 tonnes per hectare, and the average yield figure for oilseeds is 3·08 tonnes per hectare.

Horticulture Development Council

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she has completed her consultation on the future of the Horticultural Development Council; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am pleased to announce that, having consulted the council and representative organisations in England, Scotland and Wales, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I have decided that the Horticultural Development Council should continue with its present constitution and functions for a further five years.

Our consultations with the industry have clearly demonstrated that the HDC commands a high level of confidence among growers. My right hon. Friends and I welcome this positive expression of industry support for the council's work. A strongly supported grower base for research and development is vital if our industry is to compete effectively in an increasingly tough marketplace.

Service Delivery Targets

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress her Department has made in meeting service delivery targets set out in "Commitment to Service".

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The list shows the percentages of cases dealt with by each regional service centre which have met the targets set in "Commitment to Service".

Regional service centres comparative performance data for financial year 1993-94
Unless otherwise specified

Percentage rates

	Bristol	*Cambridge*	*Carlisle*	*Crewe*	*Exeter*	*Northallerton*	*Nottingham*	*Reading*	*Worcester*	[1]*Total*
Farm woodland premium scheme										
Applications	100	99	100	100	100	99	98	100	98	99
Claims	99	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99
Five year set-aside scheme										
1992-93 scheme year claims	100	100	100	100	100	100	99	99	99	99
Environmentally sensitive areas										
Applications	90	86	100	88	[4]—	100	100	100	[4]—	91
Claims	95	100	96	92	100	100	100	100	[4]—	98
Nitrate sensitive areas										
Claims	96	[4]—	[4]—	100	[4]—	100	100	100	[4]—	99
Hill livestock compensation allowance										
1994 scheme claims	99	[4]—	99	98	96	97	96	[4]—	99	98
Sheep annual premium scheme										
1993 scheme payments claims[2]	82	73	92	87	86	88	86	80	86	86
Farm and conservation grant scheme										
Applications	100	100	100	100	95	89	100	100	93	97
Claims[3]	88	96	99	100	98	98	99	100	95	98
Agriculture improvement scheme										
Plan claims[3]	100	100	97	100	100	94	100	[4]—	100	97
Ministers consent to a short-term letting or licence										
Target	93	98	88	85	100	98	99	100	100	98
Permit to purchase strychnine										
Target	94	97	96	100	100	95	99	100	93	97
Injurious weed complaints										
Target	100	100	[4]—	94	[4]—	100	93	100	100	98
Agriculture wage inspections										
Target[3]	100	[4]—	100	100	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	97

[1] Numerical totals processed expressed as a percentage of number received.
[2] SAPS lower success rate is largely due to problems associated with quota allocations.
[3] Period July 1993 to March 1994.
[4] Not entered as numbers dealt with 10 or less—numbers of cases are included in calculation of *total* percentage success rates. Non plan claims for AIS, and AHDS, FHDS and FDGS schemes, omitted from table as numbers are de minimis.

HEALTH

Deprivation Scores

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average tabular index deprivation score, used in the payment of general practitioners, for each family health services authority in order of deprivation and the average per capita spending for each family health services authority, in order of spending.

(2) what is the average primary care deprivation score for each family health services authority; and what is the average deprivation score for all them, taken together.

Mr. Sackville: The information given below is a simple average of Professor Jarman's under-privileged area

scores, grouped by FHSA. The electoral ward data have not been weighted by resident population. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 26 May, *Official report*, column *305* about the per capita spending figures for each family health services authority in England, which was placed in the Library.

The average under-privileged area scores for family health services authorities in England are:

	Average
City and East London	36·57
Camden and Islington	29·62
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	28·60
Manchester	28·49
Birmingham	26·17
Bradford	21·11
Liverpool	20·55
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	19·42
Newcastle	18·51
Wolverhampton	18·47
Rochdale	18·10
Salford	16·92
Kirklees	16·05
Sandwell	16·00
Oldham	15·72
Coventry	14·76
South Tyneside	14·35
Bolton	14·15
Brent and Harrow	14·06
Sunderland	13·69
Calderdale	13·59
Enfield and Haringey	13·08
Gateshead	12·63
Tameside	11·82
St. Helens and Knowsley	11·20
Leeds	11·03
Cleveland	10·16
North Tyneside	9·51
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	9·03
Sheffield	8·64
Redbridge	7·97
Greenwich	7·49
Walsall	6·70
Wirral	6·60
Bury	5·52
Barnet	5·28
Durham	5·22
Wigan	5·11
Doncaster	4·98
Rotherham	4·33
Croydon	3·97
Lancashire	3·71
Isle of Wight	3·49
East Sussex	3·03
Wakefield	2·86
Sefton	2·80
Hillingdon	2·34
Trafford	1·88
Barnsley	1·76
Barking and Havering	1·49
Kensington	0·84
Kingston and Richmond	0·47
Cornwall	0·43
Dudley	0·28
Humberside	0·05
Stockport	−0·07
Kent	−1·42
Dorset	−1·68
Northamptonshire	−1·87
Northumberland	−2·31
West Sussex	−2·59
Devon	−2·82
Nottinghamshire	−3·00
Suffolk	−3·02
Bedfordshire	−3·02
Derbyshire	−3·20
Cumbria	−3·53
Cambridgeshire	−3·61
Lincolnshire	−3·79
Berkshire	−3·89
Norfolk	−4·00
Wiltshire	−4·04
Hampshire	−4·21
Shropshire	−4·26
Somerset	−4·52
Cheshire	−4·56
Oxfordshire	−5·24
Gloucestershire	−5·42
Bromley	−5·48
Leicestershire	−5·77
Staffordshire	−5·89
Essex	−5·99
North Yorkshire	−6·43
Hereford and Worcester	−6·54
Avon	−6·60
Solihull	−6·65
Warwickshire	−6·82
Hertfordshire	−7·44
Buckinghamshire	−7·74
Surrey	−9·69

The average figure for all family health services authorities in England is 4·92.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average deprivation score for each district health authority; and what is the average deprivation score.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Jarman index of under-privileged area scores is used by the Department of Health only at family health services authority level for the purpose of calculating general practitioner deprivation payments.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 27 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *697*.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current infant mortality rate in each regional health authority in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Infant mortality rate for the United Kingdom by Regional Health Authority and Standard Area for 1992 and District Council Area for 1991 (latest year for available data in Northern Ireland is 1991)

	Infant mortality[1]
United Kingdom	[2]6·6
England and Wales	[3]6·6
England	6·5
Northern RHA	7·1
Yorkshire RHA	6·6
Trent RHA	6·9
East Anglian RHA	4·6
North West Thames RHA	5·5
North East Thames RHA	7·1
South East Thames RHA	6·4

	Infant mortality[1]
South West Thames RHA	5·7
Wessex RHA	5·5
Oxford RHA	6·0
South Western RHA	5·5
West Midlands RHA	8·2
Mersey RHA	5·7
North Western RHA	7·7
Wales	6·0
Scotland	6·8
Standard Areas	
Borders	5·9
Central	6·1
Dumfries and Galloway	7·4
Fife	6·7
Grampian	6·0
Highland	6·7
Lothian	7·3
Strathclyde	7·3
Tayside	5·3
Orkney Islands	8·4
Shetland Islands	3·1
Western Isles Islands	6·0
Northern Ireland (1991)	7·4
District Council Areas	
Ards	3·2
Belfast	7·1
Castlereagh	6·8
Down	9·2
Lisburn	5·3
North Down	8·1
Antrim	5·5
Ballymena	8·9
Ballymoney	2·9
Carrickfergus	17·4
Coleraine	8·4
Cookstown	8·1
Larne	4·6
Magherafelt	4·8
Moyle	[4]9·1
Newtownabbey	8·5
Armagh	7·8
Banbridge	3·9
Craigavon	9·1
Dungannon	8·5
Newry and Mourne	5·9
Fermanagh	3·5
Limavady	9·2
Derry	9·3
Omagh	7·7
Strabane	14·9

[1] Rate per 1,000 live births.

[2] United Kingdom 1992 figure based on provisional numbers and estimates for Northern Ireland 1992.

[3] Data for the rates have been assigned to the area of usual residence as stated at the registration of each event. If the address of usual residence is outside England and Wales, these events have been included in the England and Wales aggregate but excluded from the figures for individual RHAs.

[4] 1990 latest year available.

Fundholding Practices

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what average level of funding per capita has been allocated for 1994-95 to fundholding general practitioner practices in *(a)* England and *(b)* each regional health authority to enable fundholding practices to purchase those services covered by the fundholding regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional information on average fundholder budget allocations per capita is not directly comparable because of variations locally in the methods of compiling fundholder population data and differences in regional information systems. In addition, variations in average budgets per patient between regions are influenced by a number of factors, including differences in the age structures and relative levels of morbidity of regions, variations in local provider prices, as well as differences in historic referral and prescribing levels between practices in the scheme.

With these caveats, the following table shows estimated average budget allocations per patient made by regional health authorities to general practitioner fundholders in 1994-95.

Estimated average budget allocations per patient made by regional health authorities to general practitioner fundholders in 1994-95

Region	*1994-95* £
Northern and Yorkshire	180
Trent	160
Anglia and Oxford	160
North Thames	150
South Thames	160
South and West	160
West Midlands	160
North West	170
ENGLAND	160

Cornwall Health Care Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the national health service will underwrite the legal costs of the non-executive directors of the Cornwall health care trust in respect of the forthcoming libel action.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decision on the question of underwriting the costs can be made until the outcome of a preliminary hearing is known later this year.

Nurses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many learner or student nurses were employed in England in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 17 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *1017.*

General Practitioner Lists

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she has had with the North East Thames regional health authority regarding the number of patients on doctors' lists; and how many patients were removed at the instigation of the doctor in the area in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what discussions she has had with North East Thames regional health authority regarding the reasons doctors give when removing patients from their lists; how many patients were removed from lists in the last period for which figures are available without any reason being given to the patient; and what percentage of the total this represents;

(3) what discussions she has had with North East Thames regional health authority regarding the number of patients on doctors' lists; and how many patients in the area covering the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency were removed at the instigation of a doctor in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the last year for which figures are available;

(4) what discussions she has had with the North East Thames regional health authority regarding the reasons doctors give when removing patients from their lists; how many patients in the area covering the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency were removed from lists with no reason being given in the last period for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total number this represents.

Mr. Bowis: No discussions have taken place. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) today for the available information.

Mental Health

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much it costs on average to keep someone in a long-stay mental hospital at 1993-94 prices; how much it costs to resettle someone in the community for a year at 1993-94 prices; and what are the consequences for funding of health services in the community of the difference between those costs.

Mr. Bowis: It is not possible separately to identify the cost of care in a long-stay psychiatric hospital.

HIV

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the growth in each NHS region of persons with a positive HIV diagnosis in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table.

Yearly trend in report of HIV-1 Infected Persons: Geographical area of reporting laboratories, England to end December 1993

	Number of reports each year					
Region	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
England						
Northern	33	29	37	24	36	20
Yorkshire	47	41	53	52	71	44
Trent	42	44	90	42	82	89
East Anglia	26	27	18	35	43	29
North West Thames	502	548	734	770	568	615
North East Thames	316	390	416	593	585	661
South East Thames	179	224	262	335	310	326
South West Thames	57	68	93	146	138	111
Wessex	29	37	45	42	80	38
Oxford	50	34	37	53	49	63
South Western	41	40	54	58	42	36
West Midlands	47	42	92	66	90	80
Mersey	32	14	17	14	26	18
North Western	104	69	76	82	135	90

Legal Fees

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount spent on legal fees by each district health authority in each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the amount spent on legal fees by district health authority is not available centrally.

Health Promotion

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct commissioning agencies to continue to employ sufficient public health doctors, with sufficient support from other health professionals, to monitor the health of their local populations, advise on priorities in the commissioning process and provide leadership to the health alliances mentioned in "The Health of the Nation".

Dr. Mawhinney: Health service guidelines issued in November 1993, HSG(93)56, copies of which are available in the Library, set out clearly the requirement for district health authorities to employ public health doctors.

Mr. John Shepard

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends to take regarding *(a)* the conduct of Mr. Peter Raine, executive director of Brent social services department, in relation to investigation of the case of the late John Shepard, *(b)* maladministration and racial discrimination within Brent social services department, and *(c)* Mr. Raine's failure to present a report on Mr. Shepard to Brent social services committee and the suspension of a black home-help organiser.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 18 July, *Official Report,* column *20* and 19 July.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many special advisers who left her Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left her Department in each of the last five years;

(3) if she will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left her Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service. The number of special advisers joining and leaving the Department in the last five years is shown in the table:

	Joining	Leaving
1989	1	0
1990	2	1
1991	1	0
1992	1	3
1993	0	0
1994	0	0

Food Poisoning

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of food poisoning notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Sackville: There were 68,587 food poisoning notifications in England and Wales in 1993. The provisional number of notifications in 1994, up to and including the week ended 14 July, was 36,437. The provisional number of notifications in 1993, up to and including the week ended 16 July, was 34,058.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of laboratory reports of salmonella in foodstuffs to the Public Health Laboratory Service in England and Wales for each year since the introduction of the new reporting system; what are the latest figures available for this year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The new reporting system introduced by the Public Health Laboratory Service in January 1992 was designed to enhance surveillance of cases of human salmonellosis and not the reporting of foods positive for salmonella.

The number of reported cases of human salmonellosis in England and Wales since 1992 is as follows:

1992 – 31,352
1993 – 30,654

Asthma

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to introduce an approved code of practice covering respiratory sensitisers used by asthma sufferers; what representations she has received on the subject; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so; we have received no representations on the subject.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of out-patient admissions to hospital emergency units for asthmatic complaints *(a)* from 24 to 26 June 1994 and *(b)* from 24 to 26 June 1993; and what assessment she has made of the reasons for the difference.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. The cause of the very high number of asthma cases on 24 and 25 June 1994 is as yet unknown. We have written to directors of public health seeking information on the scale and extent of the episode.

Infertility Services

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy in respect of the provision of infertility services to lesbian couples and unmarried women; what specific guidance is issued by her Department on the interpretation of the requirement to give due consideration to the need of a child for a father; whether adherence to that guidance is a prerequisite for licensing by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In accordance with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, a woman shall not be provided with assisted conception treatment unless prior account has been taken of the welfare of any child born as a result of treatment including the need of that child for a father. Guidance on the application of this requirement is set out in a code of practice published by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority—the body that licenses assisted conception treatment. Copies of the code are available in the Library. It is a condition of the HFEA licence that licensed centres abide by the code of practice.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has already said that she would not expect the NHS to provide fertility treatment unless there were a mother and father and that she would expect them to be married. Appropriate guidance will be issued to the NHS in due course.

Clinical Appointments

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she holds on the postponement of clinical appointments at trust hospitals to enable consultants to attend audit meetings; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Information Division

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure of her Department's information division in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure for the Department's information division which now includes the recently established public inquiry office and the rationalisation of the Department's printing services are as follows:

	Publicity £ million	Manpower and running costs £ million
1985-86	4·513	—
1986-87	12·627	—
1987-88	12·381	—
1988-89	10·799	—
1989-90	17·248	0·890
1990-91	21·008	1·250
1991-92	24·471	1·491
1992-93	20·710	1·749
1993-94	[1]19·405	1·897

[1] Estimated.

Note: Information on publicity expenditure for the year 1979 to 1984-85 and on manpower and running costs for the years 1979 to 1988-89 are not available in the form requested.

Healthcall

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings she has had with Healthcall in the last year; and what has been her conclusion of those meetings.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no formal meetings with Healthcall in the last

year. On 13 June 1994, my right hon. Friend attended a fundraising event in aid of the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund, at the invitation of Healthcall.

Official Secrets Acts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if employees in the regional outposts of the national health service executive and the new combined regional health authorities are asked to sign an acknowledgement that they understand the terms and conditions on which they are employed, including the terms of the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 7 July, *Official Report*, column *311*.

Staff employed in the national health service sign their employment contract on appointment and in so doing they acknowledge the terms and conditions contained therein. There is no standard contract. Most of the staff employed in the regional outposts, which now form part of the new regional offices of the national health service executive, are on secondment from national health service organisations and so their original contract remains valid. Crown servants employed in the regional offices are subject to the Official Secrets Act 1989. It is normal good practice to ensure that secondees are fully aware of the obligations and responsibilities associated with the post to which they are appointed. The changes introduced on 1 April 1994 did not necessitate the issue of new contracts of employment.

NHS Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of whole-time equivalent national health service consultants employed per head of population, by district health authority, in each of the last four years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Hospital medical consultants by population in each region England—as at 30 September each year

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
	Whole-time equivalent per 100 thousand population	*Whole-time equivalent per 100 thousand population*	*Whole-time equivalent per 100 thousand population*	*Whole-time equivalent per 100 thousand population*
Northern	30·5	30·6	31·6	33·3
Yorkshire	28·3	26·5	27·3	30·6
Trent	25·7	26·2	26·7	28·2
East Anglia	28·4	30·6	31·4	29·9
North West Thames	27·0	29·9	30·3	27·0
North East Thames	31·2	32·8	32·5	35·7
South East Thames	30·0	31·0	31·8	31·6
South West Thames	26·4	27·7	28·4	26·9
Wessex	26·2	26·6	27·6	28·0
Oxford	26·1	26·5	26·7	27·4
South Western	25·3	26·0	26·7	27·0
West Midlands	27·2	27·9	28·7	29·1
Mersey	28·6	29·9	30·4	31·2
North Western	30·7	32·3	32·6	32·3

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of whole-time equivalent consultants employed in the NHS in the London implementation zone area, per head of population, in each year since 1989.

Mr. Bowis: The available information is shown in the table.

Whole-time equivalent consultants employed in the national health service in inner London per 100,000 population (estimated)

1989	51·7
1990	50·7
1991	50·8
1992	52·1

Note: The figures refer to "Inner London" (as defined in the Tomlinson report).

Patients' Choice

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what degree of patients' choice as to place of treatment was available *(a)* before and *(b)* after April 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney: A key aim of the national health service reforms is to improve patient choice. Since 1991, district health authorities and general practitioner fundholders have been able to purchase services, on behalf of their patients, and in consultation with them, in whatever place of treatment offers the best quality and value for money.

Patient Participation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *534*, if she will list those health authorities that have not made significant progress to ensure arrangements were in place to seek and act upon the views of local people.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. We have asked the chief executive of the national health service executive to follow up any shortcomings with the regional directors to ensure that any necessary remedial action is taken.

Parental Leave

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of the national health service on parental leave and leave for family reasons.

Dr. Mawhinney: For staff employed on national terms and conditions of service, special leave for domestic, personal and family reasons is available under an agreement of the general Whitley council, copies of which are available in the Library. Under the National Health

Service and Community Care Act 1990, national health service trusts have the freedom to determine their own leave arrangements for staff on trust contracts.

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the options she has put forward for *(a)* NHS fee scale and *(b)* maintenance treatment in connection with her Green Paper on dental treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) on 14 July, *Official Report,* column *702.*

Paper

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much paper was used by the national health service in each of the last five years; and what percentage of it was recycled.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available.

Equipment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of equipment used in the national health service in each of the last five years has been disposable.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available.

Abortion

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the review of current arrangements for approving and monitoring places under the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, has been completed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Further to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 18 January 1994, *Official Report,* column *531.* The review of current arrangements for approving and monitoring non-national health service premises under the Abortion Act 1967, as amended, has been completed. Conditions that have to be met for approval—known as assurances—have been updated and brought together with other guidance in a single document, known as the compendium of guidance. Copies will be placed in the Library shortly.

The approval period for non-NHS premises carrying out termination of pregnancy has been extended from two years to four years. All non-NHS premises approved under the Abortion Act 1967 will continue to be subject to monitoring and inspection by medical, nursing and administrative officials from the Department of Health, and will also be subject to the requirements of the Registered Homes Act 1984. Proprietors have been invited to seek re-approval under these arrangements from 1 August 1994. Relevant extracts from the compendium will be sent to the NHS as guidance for those purchasing and providing termination of pregnancy treatment. The compendium of guidance includes assurances required of registered pregnancy advice bureaux.

Administrative Costs

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average percentage of total budget spent by *(a)* district and *(b)* regional health authorities on (i) managerial, (ii) administrative and (iii) clerical costs in each year since 1991-92;

(2) if she will list the three regional and district health authorities which spent *(a)* the lowest percentage and *(b)* the highest of their budget on (i) managerial, (ii) administrative and (iii) clerical costs in each year since 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 19 May 1994]:* Such comparisons cannot readily be made. The information available on regional and district health authorities' total expenditure and on staff costs is derived from two different sources and covers different territory. Information about the total budgets of health authorities is derived from annual accounts which do not include the total costs of directly managed units—DMUs—and common services, such as blood transfusion and ambulance services, which may be funded from a variety of sources. Information on staff costs is derived from the financial returns of health authorities covering all employees including those in DMUs and common services. The budgets for authorities will remain the same whether or not the authorities run DMUs or common services. When a health authority has no directly managed services it will operate with a much reduced number of employees and have a consequently lower percentage of wages as a proportion of total costs. Directly managed services are the labour-intensive part of an organisation and a health authority with a DMU or regional common services will return far higher staff costs than one without. Such organisations will have income from other health authorities and other sources in addition to its own parent authority. The salary costs of staff may therefore be met from sources other than the employing health authority. It is therefore not possible to provide meaningful information in the form requested.

General Practitioners

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the numbers of patients for each area and for England as a whole removed from general practitioners' lists for the latest available year; and how many and what proportion of these were removed without their consent.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The information is shown in the table:

Region	(1) Registered Population	(2) Total Number of patients deregistered from GP Lists	(3) Column 2 as a percentage of Column 1	(4) Number of patients de-registered excluding at request of GP	(5) Column 4 as a percentage of Column 2	(6) Number of patients de-registered at request of GP	(7) Column 6 as a percentage of Column 2
Northern	3,152,959	359,784	11·4	356,466	99·1	3,318	0·9
Yorkshire	3,759,258	464,879	12·4	457,771	98·5	7,108	1·5
Trent	4,847,452	593,050	12·2	587,442	99·1	5,608	0·9
East Anglia	2,079,549	249,494	12·0	247,667	99·3	1,827	0·7
North-West Thames[2]	2,990,238	557,198	18·6	546,690	98·1	10,508	1·9
North-East Thames	4,209,244	665,292	15·8	651,376	97·9	13,916	2·1
South East Thames	3,994,252	529,485	13·3	523,796	98·9	5,689	1·1
South West Thames	3,196,570	524,493	16·4	521,030	99·3	3,463	0·7
Wessex	2,991,639	438,328	14·7	436,936	99·7	1,392	0·3
Oxford	2,676,585	365,527	13·7	362,980	99·3	2,547	0·7
South Western	3,550,215	475,284	13·4	473,098	99·5	2,186	0·5
West Midlands	5,454,584	689,416	12·6	678,618	98·4	10,798	1·6
Mersey	2,485,666	293,162	11·8	288,606	98·4	4,556	1·6
North Western	4,103,179	486,466	11·9	480,389	98·8	6,077	1·2
England	49,491,390	6,691,858	13·5	6,612,865	98·8	78,993	1·2

Note:—Figures include patients who have left GP area/died.
[2] Does not include data for Hertfordshire as this is not available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 10 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *354*, what was the total number of general practitioners and the total number of secretaries, administrators, receptionists and practice managers by each family health services authority at *(a)* October 1993, *(b)* April 1994 and *(c)* October 1990.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* Information relating to October 1993 and October 1990 will be placed in the Library. Data for April 1994 are not yet available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, columns *26-27*, (1) what is the average budget per patient for those of general practitioner fundholders in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94, for England and by region;

(2) what is the average budget per patient for general practitioner fundholders in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 for England and by region.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Regional information on average fundholder budget allocations per patient is not directly comparable because of variations locally in the methods of compiling fundholder population data and differences in regional information systems. In addition, variations in average budgets per patient between regions are influenced by a number of factors, including differences in the age structures and relative levels of morbidity of regions, variations in local provider prices, as well as differences in historic referral and prescribing levels between practices in the scheme.

Moreover, these data are not directly comparable over time as, from 1993-94, the scope of the general practitioner fundholder scheme was expanded to include the purchase of community health services; in addition, the minimum list size criterion for joining the scheme was reduced from 9,000 to 7,000 patients per fund.

With those caveats, the following table shows estimated average budget allocations per patient made by regional health authorities to general practitioner fundholders in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Estimated average budget allocations per patient made by regional health authorities to general practitioner fundholders 1991-92 to 1993-94

Region	1991-92 £	1992-93 £	1993-94 £
Northern	130	140	170
Yorkshire	120	140	160
Trent	110	120	140
East Anglian	120	130	160
North West Thames	110	120	160
North East Thames	110	100	130
South East Thames	100	110	150
South West Thames	100	110	140
Wessex	110	130	150
Oxford	100	110	130
South Western	100	120	150
West Midlands	120	130	150
Mersey	110	130	160
North Western	110	120	150
England	110	120	150

Tuberculosis

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is held by her Department on the number of children infected by tuberculosis in *(a)* each of the London boroughs and *(b)* England.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 26 April 1994, c. 152-53]:* I regret that there were inaccuracies in my previous reply.

Revised information is given in the table. Occasional variations in the figures appear because some physicians continue to notify children who are receiving chemo-prophylaxis rather than full therapy for tuberculosis. The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys excludes these as far as possible from the aggregated data but it is not always easy to identify them.

The team running the 1993 survey of notifications at the Public Health Laboratory Service is examining continuing ambiguities in the notification system for tuberculosis and will report later this year. Any changes in the surveillance of tuberculosis will be discussed then.

Number of cases of tuberculosis for children aged 0-16 years in England and London boroughs for 1990-92

	1990	1991	1992
England	443	506	561
City of London	0	0	0
Barking and Dagenham London Borough	2	0	1
Barnet London Borough	5	4	16
Bexley London Borough	2	4	2
Brent London Borough	2	12	9
Bromley London Borough	0	3	3
Camden London Borough	2	10	7
Croydon London Borough	6	4	6
Ealing London Borough	2	7	9
Enfield London Borough	1	4	2
Greenwich London Borough	5	2	4
Hackney London Borough	6	7	7
Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough	4	0	3
Haringey London Borough	3	4	8
Harrow London Borough	1	5	4
Havering London Borough	0	0	1
Hillingdon London Borough	0	4	6
Hounslow London Borough	2	1	10
Islington London Borough	4	2	3
Kensington and Chelsea London Borough	6	3	0
Kingston upon Thames London Borough	0	0	0
Lambeth London Borough	3	2	8
Lewisham London Borough	6	1	1
Merton London Borough	1	1	0
Newham London Borough	13	13	9
Redbridge London Borough	6	7	2
Richmond upon Thames London Borough	0	0	0
Southwark London Borough	9	9	9
Sutton London Borough	1	2	0
Tower Hamlets London Borough	5	9	9
Waltham Forest London Borough	6	5	1
Wandsworth London Borough	0	3	1
City of Westminster London Borough	3	6	5

Note:

Although excluded as far as possible some of these include cases where chemoprophylaxis is being given rather than full therapy for tuberculosis.

Nutrition

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answers of 27 June, *Official Report*, columns *413-14*, and 12 July, *Official Report*, columns *525-26*, if she will list the reports issued by her Department since 1985 in which information is specifically given about the relationship between family disposable income and the extent to which the daily amounts for energy and nutrients, recommended by the panels and committees appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, have been met.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Information on the relationship between nutrient intake and family disposable income is not available. However, each annual report of the National Food Survey Committee gives the percentage of the estimated average requirements for energy and reference nutrient intake for nutrients met by the household diet in families in different income groups based on the gross income of the head of household. Copies of these reports are in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Royal Yacht

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he had received prior to the announcement that the royal yacht Britannia is to be decommissioned; and what representations he has subsequently received.

Mr. Hanley: Over the last year, my Department received a number of letters on the subject of the royal yacht, in which a wide range of views was expressed. Since the decision to decommission Her Majesty's yacht Britannia was announced, my Department has received some 60 letters from hon. Members and members of the public.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cost and effectiveness studies have been made of *(a)* the royal yacht Britannia and *(b)* the royal Danish yacht; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The decision to decommission the royal yacht Britannia was reached after an extensive and detailed review of the issues involved, including the cost and effectiveness of the yacht. My Department has made no specific study of the royal Danish yacht.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column 116, if he will name the people described by him as honest and independent, who concluded that the Iraqi Government are deliberately trying to harm the Shia marsh Arabs.

Mr. Hanley: The answer referred, in the main, to the work of trained analysts in my Department. It is not our practice to reveal the names of officials engaged in work of this nature, but their conclusions are consistent with those of the United Nations special rapporteur on Iraq and the wetland ecosystem research group at Royal Holloway university of London.

Hercules Replacement

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the Hercules future large aircraft replacement.

Mr. Aitken: My colleagues and I have been contacted in recent months by a number of interested parties.

Spearfish Torpedoes

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he now intends to proceed with the procurement of Spearfish torpedoes for Trident submarines as well as the Swiftsure and Trafalgar class.

Mr. Aitken: The Spearfish torpedo, which entered service with the Royal Navy earlier this year, replaces the Tigerfish torpedo in all Royal Navy submarines. The tender for the main production order for Spearfish torpedoes is currently being considered.

PEE Pendine

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which establishment the dynamic test track work currently undertaken at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, will be transferred.

Mr. Aitken: This is the subject of further detailed study. On present assumptions it is planned to transfer the dynamic test track work to PEE Shoeburyness.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the establishments to which he expects the work currently undertaken at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, to be transferred.

Mr. Aitken: This is the subject of further study but, on present assumptions, it is planned to transfer this work to PEE Shoeburyness, but some work may also be transferred to PEE Eskmeals and the test and evaluation establishment, Larkhill.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department will complete further studies of the technical aspects and the assessment of the likely future work load in a trading environment of the long and short test tracks at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The technical studies and the initial assessment of future work load should both be completed by the end of the current financial year. Under another recommendation of the defence costs study, it is planned that the Directorate General of Test and Evaluation will become part of the proposed science and technology agency and be managed within its trading fund. The effects of trading will not be clear until some time after trading starts, currently planned for 1 April 1995.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his evaluation of the possible reprovision of facilities currently at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, for work formerly undertaken at Cold Meece will be completed.

Mr. Aitken: We hope to conclude this evaluation by the end of this calendar year.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which establishment the work currently at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, and formerly carried out at Cold Meece will be transferred.

Mr. Aitken: This is the subject of further study. On present assumptions it is planned to transfer this work to PEE Shoeburyness, but some work may also go to PEE Eskmeals and TEE Larkhill.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the decontamination costs of the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, following its proposed closure.

Mr. Aitken: If the closure of this establishment is confirmed following consultation, it is planned to place a commercial contract for this work. The estimates of cost are, therefore, commercially confidential. I can confirm, however, that these costs are included in the summary investment appraisal attached to the Director General Test and Evaluations consultative document.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the rundown of the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, to *(a)* begin and *(b)* be completed, if the decision to close the establishment is confirmed after consultation.

Mr. Aitken: Precise timings are still under consideration but, if closure is confirmed, a phased rundown is expected to begin in 1995. The duration of the rundown will depend on further studies of the technical aspects and the impact on demand for DGTE's facilities of full cost trading in the light of the organisation's move to the proposed science and technology agency.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence staff and contractors currently employed at the proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, he expects will be offered work at other establishments if and when work is transferred from Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: It is too early to give an accurate assessment of how many Ministry of Defence staff at PEE Pendine would be offered work elsewhere in the Department. Recruitment of ex-contractor's staff by contractors at other establishments would be a matter for them.

Low Flying

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what increase in low-flying activity he expects to arise from the increases in training announced as part of "Front Line First" and from the relocation of RAF personnel from Germany to the United Kingdom; and whether he will ensure that any increase in low-flying is not borne by areas which currently experience intensive levels of low flying.

Mr. Hanley: It is too early to say whether the overall increase in aircrew flying training hours, and the changes to the organisation of RAF Germany, will lead to an increase in the amount of low flying carried out in the United Kingdom. We will, however, continue to spread low flying activity within the United Kingdom as widely as possible.

"Front Line First"

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the planned level of defence expenditure for each of the next three years following the publication of "Front Line First";

(2) what percentage of gross national product will be spent on defence in each of the next three years taking into account "Front Line First".

Mr. Hanley: Planned levels of defence expenditure for 1994-95 to 1996-97 announced last December and set out in the "Statement of the Defence Estimates 1994", Cm 2550 are unchanged as a consequence of "Front Line First". Spending in each year as a percentage of forecast gross domestic product is expected to be as follows:

	Per cent.
1994-95	3·4
1995-96	3·1
1996-97	2·9

Music Training

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the costs of training military bandsmen in each service on a comparable basis which is consistent in its treatment of *(a)* music training and *(b)* military training and sets out under appropriate accounting headings the direct and indirect costs and in addition separates out excess security costs arising from military establishments with surplus capacity.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 20 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *64.*

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the capital and repair costs incurred at *(a)* the RAF music training school at Uxbridge, *(b)* Kneller hall and *(c)* Royal Marines school of music at Deal in each year since 1986; and if he will show separately rebuilding and security costs incurred as a result of the IRA bombing of Deal.

Mr. Hanley: Central records are not available which give the information requested in the form available, or over the period requested in all cases. Where readily available, the information is as follows:

Year	*Maintenance* £	*New works* £
RMSM Deal		
1986-87	1,079,605	34,604
1987-88	864,127	36,487
1988-89	90,831	224,231
1989-90	1,090,000	50,000
1990-91	1,694.000	260,000
1991-92	1,631,000	126,500
1992-93	1,277,000	61,000
1993-94	982,000	163,000
Expenditure as a result of bomb incident: Security works £784,697. Building works £193,852.		
RMSM Kneller Hall		
1989-92		2,008,000
1992-93	230,000	
1993-94	156,000	

	Maintenance and new works £
RAFSM Uxbridge	
1990-91	14,476
1991-92	19,785
1992-93	17,676
1993-94	20,088

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current market value for the freehold sites at *(a)* the RAF music school, Uxbridge, *(b)* the Army music school at Kneller hall, Twickenham and *(c)* the Royal Marines school of music at Deal on the basis of an arm's-length sale of land and buildings in their present state and condition.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is commercial in confidence.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the financial and accounting reports produced by the defence costs study dealing with military music and the Royal Marines school of music at Deal.

Mr. Hanley: The reports prepared by the defence costs study teams are internal working documents. It is not our normal practice to publish such documents. Relevant financial information on the proposal to transfer Royal Marines music training from Deal will, however, be included in a consultative document to be issued in due course.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Aitken: The Government continue to place a high priority on helping small businesses through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

Measures operated by my Department to assist small businesses include:

1. The services of the New Suppliers Service (NSS) which meets and corresponds regularly with several thousand suppliers each year, a very large proportion of which are small firms, offering advice on ways in which they can bring their goods and services to the attention of our buyers. The NSS also supports the Training and Enterprise Councils which provide business counselling and support small businesses.

2. We continue to promote the many opportunities which exist to sell to my Department by publicising contracts in various publications including the Defence Contracts Bulletin, which is a particularly useful source of sub-contract opportunities.

3. Businesses of various sizes have been successful in tendering competitively for the provision of contracted-out services for the Department.

4. My Department is systematically reviewing its contracting processes to ensure that all administrative procedures are still required and to reduce any unnecessary burdens on businesses. When considering new contracting policies and procedures, we take particular account of the implications for businesses of all sizes.

Challenger Tanks

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place an order for further Challenger 2 tanks.

Mr. Aitken: An order was placed with Vickers plc for a further 259 Challenger 2 main battle tanks on 14 July.

Service Redundancies

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel he expects to make redundant by the end of 1994.

Mr. Hanley: In the financial year 1994-95, 11,095 service personnel are due to leave on redundancy terms. Over 90 per cent. of these personnel are volunteers.

Civilian Employees

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether civilian employees applying for employment with the Ministry of Defence are always security-vetted by the Royal Ulster Constabulary prior to taking up employment.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to discuss in detail the ways in which security vetting is carried out.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of whether all employees working in Fort Whiterock or Northern Howard Street Mill bases from 1988 to the present were security vetted.

Mr. Aitken: All civilian staff employed in Northern Ireland by my Department are vetted to the appropriate security level.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes *(a)* he has recently made or *(b)* he proposes to make in the funds available to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Mr. Hanley: My Department will continue to honour to the full its obligation to fund the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in maintaining the war graves and memorials of British and other Commonwealth war dead to the very high standard they deserve.

Rio Declaration

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *198*, if he will identify the specific training activities for members of the armed forces which are undertaken in connection with treaty obligations under the terms of the Rio declaration in relation to providing protection for the environment in time of armed conflict; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the likely willingness of potential future military opponents to abide by the terms of the Rio declaration and to protect the environment in time of armed conflict; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment he has made of the impact upon the United Kingdom's military effectiveness of treaty obligations under the terms of the Rio declaration to protect the environment in time of armed conflict; and if he will make a statement;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *198*, what specific guidance is given by his Department to the armed forces on the interpretation of treaty obligations under the terms of the Rio declaration to protect the environment in time of armed conflict;

(5) if he will list those weapons and defence systems the use of which he has identified as being contrary to treaty obligations under the terms of the Rio declaration to protect the environment in time of armed conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Rio declaration is a statement of principles, balancing environmental concerns with the need for economic development. The declaration is not an international treaty which places specific obligations on signatory states. Principle 24 of the declaration states:

"Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary".

Accordingly, chapter 39 of agenda 21 identifies the UN General Assembly and its sixth committee as the appropriate forums for the development of international law to protect the environment in times of armed conflict. The United Kingdom is participating in the work of the sixth committee, which is being undertaken in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross. This work has not yet reached the stage which would enable specific guidance to be issued to the armed forces.

Wrens

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Wrens have served at sea on Royal Naval vessels since the introduction of this policy by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Between the introduction of sea service for female personnel on 1 September 1990 and mid-July 1994, 1,673 have served at sea in royal naval vessels. This figure consists of 265 female RN officers, 1,365 female RN ratings and 43 female ratings from the Queen Alexandra RN Nursing Service.

Salisbury Plain and Otterburn

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of alternatives to the use of AS90s and multiple launch rocket systems on Salisbury plain and Otterburn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 July 1994:]* My Department keeps possible alternative training areas under review. Apart from Salisbury plain and Otterburn, however, there are no training areas in the United Kingdom able to accommodate AS90 and MLRS. As far as overseas locations are concerned we will of course consider any viable alternatives while taking account of the financial and political implications of such training.

The only existing overseas training area which could accommodate the training needs of AS90 and MLRS is the British Army Training Unit at Suffield, Canada (BATUS). This facility is already utilised extensively by the British Army for battle group training. Climatic conditions and the emphasis placed by the Canadian authorities on their own increased in-country training requirements may not allow additional British training to take place.

Research Agency

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what targets he has set for the Defence Research Agency in 1994-95.

Mr. Aitken: The targets recently set for the Defence Research Agency in 1994-95 and subsequent years are as follows:

a. To meet profit and cash targets consistent with a 6 per cent. ROCE.
b. To maintain overall utilisation at a level of 51 per cent.
c. To reduce the total overhead expressed as a percentage of total variable costs from 15 per cent. at 1 April 1994 to 12 per cent. at 31 March 1995.
d. To market test 4 per cent. of DRA's turnover; to achieve secondary competition amounting to 3 per cent. of turnover; and to achieve competition in subcontracts amounting to 6 per cent. of turnover.
e. To maintain achievement on time of customers' milestones at the 1993-94 level of 85 per cent.
f. From December 1993 survey baseline to achieve 2 per cent. improvement in overall performance by December 1994 and a 4 per cent. increase in the quality and project management measures.
g. To have met by the 31 March 1995 all 1994-95 rationalisation project milestones as specified in BP94 and to have achieved a running cost reduction of £70 million per annum.
h. To achieve a non-MOD income of £64 million in 1994-95.
i. To achieve formal quality certification to ISO9000 for one sector by 31 December 1994.

Analytical Services Agency

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what performance targets have been set for the Defence Analytical Services Agency for 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The following key targets have been set for the chief executive of the Defence Analytical Services Agency for this financial year and beyond. These reflect the continuing need to secure economies in defence spending and an increased capability to meet the Department's evolving needs. They build on progress already made by the agency in meeting its targets in 1992-93 and 1993-94. The revised targets are as follows:

Delivery of customer services

a. About three quarters of the Agency's business is suitable for coverage by Service Level Agreements with Customers, which set out targets and standards for the level of service, timeliness and quality of work. For this part of the business Key Targets are:

1. To increase the coverage to 100 per cent. for Service Level Agreements in the areas suitable.

2. To meet at least 95 per cent. of the timeliness and quality targets set in the established Service Level Agreements.

b. For the remaining parts of the business (for which Service Level Agreements are not appropriate) to meet at least 95 per cent. of the timeliness and quality targets in each Project Agreement.

c. For all parts of the business, to achieve, in the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, at least 90 per cent of customers expressing themselves satisfied or better with the timeliness, quality of work and helpfulness of staff.

Efficiency and use of resources

The agency will be expected, by using improved information technology, to increase efficiency in the production of regular satistical reports by 5 per cent. The chief executive will also be responsible for the development and implementation of a system for identifying the full cost of each of DASA's outputs.

Decoy System

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans to upgrade the existing decoy system fitted to Royal Navy frigates and destroyers.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that, following a competition, we have recently placed a contract worth around £80 million with GEC-Marconi Defence Systems Ltd. covering the development and initial production of an offboard active decoy and a ship fitted control system for the Royal Navy.

The offboard active decoy, known as DLH, will upgrade the existing SEAGNAT decoy system. It will be fitted to all frigates and destroyers as well as major auxiliaries as a soft kill device forming an integral part of the Royal Navy's layered defence in anti-air warfare by providing a means of decoying radar homing anti-ship missiles through the use of electronic protection measures.

The work is expected to last six years and maintain approximately 100 jobs at GEC-Marconi initially at Stanmore, and then around 250 jobs at the company's Portsmouth site as the project moves into the production phase, as well as sustaining a similar additional number of jobs within their sub-contractors.

This order is good news for the Royal Navy and for GEC-Marconi.

Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation Defence Agency has reported its performance in financial year 1993-94; and what targets have been agreed for it in financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: In respect of financial year 1993-94, copies of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation Defence Agency's annual report and accounts have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

In respect of financial year 1994-95, the Director General Aircraft (Navy), acting as the owner of the agency on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence under the terms of the agency's framework document, has been set the following targets for the coming financial year:

Quantity:	To complete 100 per cent. of the funded task as detailed in the DGA(N) Tri-Service Schedule of Identified Repair Work.
Cost and Productivity:	The target achieved to be maintained or improved.
Quality:	To improve quality by reducing the NARO index by 2.
Timeliness:	To complete more than 95 per cent. of contracts on time.
Efficiency:	To improve the NARO efficiency index to 65.

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has begun his review of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation Defence Agency.

Mr. Hanley: A review of the agency status of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation has now started. As a defence agency the performance of the NARO will be evaluated and NARO activities will be subject to the normal prior options tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review", Cm 2430.

Comments from interested parties should be sent by 23 September 1994 to Rear-Admiral Roger Moylan-Jones, Director General Aircraft (Navy), Ministry of Defence, Room 114, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 2YP.

Gulf Trust

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the winding up of the Gulf trust.

Mr. Hanley: The trust deed governing the Gulf trust expires on 31 July. As originally envisaged, the united services trustee, which is the trustee of the trust, will pass the remaining money, including the accrued interest, to the three service benevolent funds—the King George's Fund for Sailors, the Army Benevolent Fund and the RAF Benevolent Fund. It is the three service benevolent funds which have been dealing with individual applications for assistance from the Gulf trust from eligible personnel. The provisional amounts being passed to each of the benevolent funds are set out; these may change marginally to take account of payments out and interest accruing between 11 July 1994 and the date the Gulf trust is formally wound up. The money will be held separately for the exclusive use of those eligible to benefit from the Gulf trust for as long as is necessary to ensure, so far as reasonably practical, that all accepted claims are fully provided for. This will be for a minimum of 10 years. Provision is also being made for portions of the money to be transferred between the benevolent funds, if necessary.

for the benefit of personnel covered by the Gulf trust. These arrangements are designed to ensure that the objectives of the Gulf trust continue to be met and in particular fulfil the stated intention of meeting needs arising from the conflict over the long term.

	£
King George's Fund for Sailors	153,108
Army Benevolent Fund	2,238,318
RAF Benevolent Fund	427,017

Criminal Justice

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average length of time which elapses between the committal of an offence and a court martial hearing in the military criminal justice system.

Mr. Hanley: The average length of time between the date an offence was committed—or it was discovered, or investigation of it started, where appropriate—and the date of the court martial hearing, across all three services, is about six months.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of the Army legal aid scheme budget was spent on the employment of civilian lawyers in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(2) in what proportion of cases soldiers and NCOs use civilian rather than Army advocates when facing district courts martial;

(3) how many soldiers were retained and for how long, despite the expiry of their time in the Army, awaiting the conclusion of a district court martial proceeding in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Chinook Helicopters

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has taken from pilots of Chinook helicopters regarding their experiences with the computerised control box, the FADEC.

Mr. Hanley: As part of normal flight safety procedures, all Chinook helicopters are required to submit reports on any unusual occurrence experienced with the aircraft systems and this includes the full authority digital engine control—FADEC—system.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions there has been an engine cut out while a Chinook helicopter in flight was using the computerised control box, the FADEC.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no incidents of an engine cut-out in flight on RAF Chinook helicopters using the full authority digital engine control—FADEC—system.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *437*, if he will set out the reasons for his departmental conclusion that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament report's proposals do not represent a realistic approach to disarmament.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence's speech to the Centre for Defence Studies on 16 November 1993 set out the reasons for the approach to disarmament adopted by Her Majesty's Government. A copy of this has been placed in the Library of the House.

Porton Down

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with Mr. Mick Roche in regard to claims for compensation for former soldiers who have been involved in experiments on chemical and biological warfare protection as scientific guinea pigs at the chemical and biological defence establishment at Porton Down.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is aware of a number of letters from a Mr. T. M. Roche about participation in trials at Porton Down, but we know of no specific compensation claims from either him or other individuals on the matter.

Naval Equipment Programme

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future naval equipment programme following the decisions taken in the defence costs study

Mr. Aitken: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his statement to the House on 14 July, the defence costs study "Front Line First" has enabled us to make a number of significant enhancements to our front-line naval capability. During the course of the statement, an order was announced for a further batch of seven Sandown class single role minehunters, and an invitation to tender for the design and build of a second batch of the highly successful Trafalgar class of nuclear-powered submarines. We shall also shortly issue an intiation to tender for two new assault ships to replace HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid. In addition, we plan to issue an invitation to tender for a further batch of type 23 frigates during the coming year. The Government will assess the case thereafter on the basis of price and operational need. The purchase of additional anti-submarine and gunnery targets was also announced, and this will allow more realistic training for ships and naval aircraft deployed away from usual target facilities.

We announced that we will be examining the case for acquiring conventionally armed Tomahawk land attack missiles for the Navy, and we will be seeking information from the Government of the United States of America and from industry.

Other major projects in the future naval equipment programme, such as Trident, the common new generation frigate—Project Horizon—and the EH101 Merlin helicopter, continue to make good progress.

This is a substantial programme of investment in new equipment, and the decision announced on 14 July represent a major boost to British industry, as well as providing vital enhancements to the Royal Navy.

Defence Spending

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest figures available for defence spending as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of the members of the NATO alliance and the same figures for the year 1985.

Mr. Hanley: Details of NATO countries' defence expenditures in 1993 as a percentage of gross domestic product, are contained in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994", Cm 2550. Corresponding figures for 1985 are set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986", Cm 9736-I. Copies of both documents are in the Library of the House.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, at 1993-94 prices, the total for United Kingdom defence spending for each year since 1970 including the planned total for 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

	£000
1970-71	16,467
1971-72	17,015
1972-73	18,815
1973-74	19,668
1974-75	21,387
1975-76	22,193
1976-77	22,524
1977-78	21,872
1978-79	21,799
1979-80	23,134
1980-81	23,798
1981-82	24,267
1982-83	25,881
1983-84	26,596
1984-85	28,091
1985-86	27,854
1986-87	27,279
1987-88	26,717
1988-89	25,339
1989-90	25,610
1990-91	25,453
1991-92	26,352
1992-93	23,776
1993-94	22,881
1994-95	22,222

Notes:
1. Figures include exceptional expenditure on Falklands/Gulf conflicts but exclude Gulf burden sharing contributions from other Governments.
2. Figures from 1978-79 take account of the technical changes in the treatment of Armed Forces and civilian pensions described in the 1992 Autumn Statement (Cm 2096) and other classification changes. It has not been possible to adjust figures for years before 1978-79 on to a fully consistent basis and comparisons with 1978-79 and later years may therefore be unreliable.
3. Figures from 1992-93 onwards exclude provision for the security and intelligence services.
4. Figures for 1993-94 reflects provisional outturn as published in the Cash Limit Outturn White Paper on 14 Jul 94 (Cm 2617) and is adjusted in line with Note 3.

Research and Procurement Projects

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the statement issued on behalf of 11 European defence manufacturers associations on 21 June; and if he will list the current defence research and procurement projects on which he is engaged with partners in Europe.

Mr. Aitken: I have noted the views of industry as expressed in the statement made on behalf of 11 European defence manufacturers associations on 21 June. Details of our current collaborative defence projects are given in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994".

Al Yamamah Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a table showing the unit price in each year of the barrels of oil used as a basis of payment in the Al Yamamah programme.

Mr. Aitken: No. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on detailed matters concerning individual defence export sales.

Sir Bedivere

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in considering the bids for the contract for the refurbishment of the motor vessel the Sir Bedivere, he will apply the same attention to the foreign business links of all bidders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: All bids have been evaluated against the same criteria.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many parliamentary questions have received *(a)* written and *(b)* oral answers from his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It is, however, a matter of public record.

Departmental Papers

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the White and Green papers and consultative documents published by his Department in the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: Records are not held centrally.

My Department does, however, issue an annual White Paper entitled "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Other White Papers and consultative documents are issued as appropriate and copies are placed in the Library of the House.

Ship Refitting Contracts

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on current ship refitting contracts.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 19 July, *Official Report*, columns *114-15*.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(3) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: The figures for the special advisers in my Department are given in the table.

	(a) Joined the Department	(b) Left the Department
1990	—	1
1991	1	—
1992	1	1
1993	1	1
1994	—	—

Special advisers are not obliged to advise the Department of their subsequent employer upon leaving.

RNSD Eaglescliffe

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement setting out the precise reasons why RNSD Eaglescliffe is to close;

(2) when he will publish consultation papers on the future of RNSD Eaglescliffe;

(3) when he next intends to visit RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Hanley: It is estimated that the proposal to close RNSD Eaglescliffe would save my Department some £52 million over 10 years and £7 million per annum thereafter. Savings on this scale are made possible as a result of continuing reductions in the level of naval stocks coupled with more efficient operating arrangements. The closure of RNSD Eaglescliffe would be part of a long-standing process of rationalising the naval logistic support area through concentrating storage facilities closer to the waterfront and away from inland areas. The rationale for, and implications of, the proposal to close RNSD Eaglescliffe will be set out in a detailed consultative document which will be issued to all interested parties as soon as possible.

Although neither my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence nor I have any current plans to visit RNSD Eaglescliffe, we will consider all representations made concerning our proposals as part of the consultation process, the period of which has been extended to three months from 14 July.

RNAD Trecwn

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions he has given the defence land agent to consult the work force at RNAD Trecwn about the suitability of bidders before disposing of the site.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to do so.

Proof and Experimental Establishments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the existing length and area of the gunnery range at *(a)* Shoeburyness and *(b)* Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The area and maximum length of the numerous gunnery ranges are as follows:

(a) *Shoeburyness*
Area: Over 34,000 acres including foreshore Gunnery Range: 25·7km.

(b) *Pendine*
Area: Over 4,700 acres including foreshore Gunnery Range: 20km.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence he will list the gross income generated from private contractors by each of the proof and experimental establishments in each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is as follows:

(All figures in £000)

Year	Eskmeals	Shoeburyness	ETC Foulness	Pendine
1989-90	1,338·52	1,219·6	—	805·11
1990-91	1,008·98	720·9	13·6	661·92
1991-92	1,049.32	1,077.4	3.33	1,043·77
1992-93	694·77	432·0	66·3	651·51
1993-94	915·64	1,006·9	80.0	580.39

Note: The Proof and Experimental Establishments at Inchterf and Cold Meece, which closed in 1992 and 1993 respectively, are excluded from these figures. P&EE Lavington is included in the figures for P&EE Shoeburyness.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the capital costs incurred in facilitating the transfer of small arms and cannon work from Cold Meece to Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The cost was £858,300.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what legally enforceable powers covering gunnery range safety currently exist at *(a)* Shoeburyness and *(b)* Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The following statutory instruments have been made under the provisions of the Military Lands Acts 1892 to 1903:

(a) *Shoeburyness*
Number 1189 of 1935
Number 714 of 1936

(b) *Pendine*
Number 1627 of 1973
Number 475 of 1981

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the capital costs required to facilitate the proposed transfer of small arms and cannon work from Pendine to Shoeburyness.

Mr. Aitken: If the closure of the establishment is confirmed it is planned to place a commercial contract for this work. The estimate of cost is, therefore, commercially confidential. I can confirm, however, that the costs are included, but not separately identified, in the summary investment appraisal, attached to the Director General Test and Evaluation's consultative document.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those customers of the dynamic test bracks at proof and experimental establishment, Pendine who have been consulted by his Department during the Directorate General of Test and Evaluation study.

Mr. Aitken: The commercial customers concerned were the Society of British Aerospace Companies and Royal Ordnance plc. Discussions were also held with relevant internal Ministry of Defence customers including the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the gross income generated by the dynamic test tracks of proof and experimental establishment, Pendine in each of the last five years; and how much of this was from *(a)* private contractors and *(b)* Government organisations.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is as follows:

	Private £'000	*Government £'000*
FY 1989-90	253·18	—
FY 1990-91	260·73	—
FY 1991-92	485·23	—
FY 1992-93	5·55	—
FY 1993-94	—	1,086·60

The large amount of Government work in financial year 1993-94 is explained by the move of the Defence Research Agency to a trading fund.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been the decontamination costs to date at Cold Meece.

Mr. Aitken: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the total decontamination costs for Cold Meece.

Mr. Aitken: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of MOD police for proof and experimental establishment, Pendine in each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The information is as follows:

	£K
1990-91	553
1991-92	570
1992-93	598
1993-94	630
1994-95	[1]640

[1] Estimated for full year.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current restrictions on safety grounds at the gunnery ranges at *(a)* Shoeburyness and *(b)* Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The proof and experimental establishment has no nett explosive quantity limitation but of the 20 batteries currently in use only eight can be used at any one time because of safety considerations. PEE Pendine, which has an NEQ limit of 125 kg, has 22 facilities of which up to 12 could be used at any one time.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the capital costs required to facilitate the transfer of small arms and cannon work from proof and experimental establishment, Pendine to Shoeburyness.

Mr. Aitken: If the closure of the establishment is confirmed it is planned to place a commercial contract for this work. The estimate of cost is, therefore, commercially confidential. I can confirm, however, that the costs are included, but not separately identified, in the summary investment appraisal, attached to the Director General Test and Evaluation's consultative document.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the gross income generated from Government Departments by each of the proof and experimental establishments in each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is as follows:

£000

Year	*Eskmeals*	*Shoeburyness*	*ETC Foulness*	*Pendine*
1989-90	—	24·6	—	—
1990-91	—	0·8	—	—
1991-92	—	112·4	—	—
1992-93	—	61·0	—	—
1993-94	536·57	1,139·7	—	1,678·62

Note: The Proof and Experimental Establishments at Inchterf and Cold Meece, which closed in 1992 and 1993 respectively, are excluded from these figures. P and EE Lavington is included in the figures for P and EE Shoeburyness. Figures for financial year 1993-94 are higher than previous years because of the Defence Research Agency's move to a Trading Fund.

Music Schools

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the requirements for prior training in basic music which apply to bandsmen entering *(a)* the Royal Marine school of music at Deal, *(b)* the military music school at Kneller Hall and *(c)* the Royal Air Force school of music; how many musical instruments bandsmen are fully trained at each of those schools; and to what level of orchestral playing bandsmen are trained at each of those schools.

Mr. Hanley: The entry qualifications at each of the three schools is as follows:

Deal

There is no set musical grade ability requirement. On completion of the normal recruitment procedures and a musical assessment, all entrants are subject to a week long audition which determines musical ability. Guidance given to RN/RM careers officers is that potential recruits will require a minimum musical standard equivalent to a grade 5.

Kneller Hall

A musician with some experience in bands or orchestras who holds a certificate of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music at grade 8 or equivalent.

Uxbridge

The RAF requires potential bandsmen to be of a minimum Grade 8 Associated Board standard in one instrument. It is current practice, however, to recruit musicians direct from music college/University.

The numbers of bandsmen who undertake basic bandsmen training at the three establishments are as follows:

Deal	—	15-20 per annum (Note 1)
Kneller Hall	—	100 per annum (Note 2)
Uxbridge	—	Nil

The levels of orchestral playing to which bandsmen are training at each of the schools is as follows:

Deal	Musicians: Performance Diploma Sergeant: Pre-course to LRSM Bandmaster: LRSM
Kneller Hall	Musicians: O-A Level, GCSE/Diploma Sergeants: A Level, GCSE/Diploma Serg Majors: Diploma Bandmaster: Diploma/Degree Director of Music: Advanced Diploma/Degree
Uxbridge	The structure of further musical training at RAF Uxbridge enables bandsmen to attain a high level of orchestral playing.

Notes:
1. In addition, some 10-15 Corporals, Sergeants and Bandmasters also undertake further musical training at Deal each year on courses of varying length.
2. In addition, around 100 Sergeants, Sergant Majors, Bandmasters and Directors of Music undertake further musical training at Kneller Hall each year on courses of varying length.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the proposal to move the Royal Marines school of music from Deal has been fully appraised in accordance with commitment by the then permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence set out in paragraph 510 on page 7 of the "11th Report of the Committee of Public Accounts for Session 1985-86"; and if he will publish the investment appraisal.

Mr. Hanley: A full appraisal has been made of the proposal to transfer the training of Royal Marine musicians from Deal, in accordance with the commitment by the then permanent secretary. A consultation document setting out the options considered and the rationale for our proposals will be issued as soon as possible. Except for commercially sensitive details, this will include all relevant financial information.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to shorten the training of Royal Marines bandsmen from the present period of two years and eight months.

Mr. Hanley: As indicated in the defence cost report "Front Line First", further work is in hand to establish whether there is scope to conduct the initial training of military musicians through bursary or scholarship schemes at civilian colleges of music. This could be expected to have implications for the duration of training.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will conduct an investment appraisal to determine the savings to the Exchequer resulting from the intelligence centre moving to the marine barracks at Deal assuming *(a)* the Royal Marines school of music remains at Deal with the intelligence centre and *(b)* a combined defence school of music is set up at Deal with the intelligence centre.

Mr Hanley: As announced in the report on the outcome of "Front Line First", we intend to transfer Royal Marines music training from Deal by 1 April 1996. Further work is in hand on the future requirement, and on possible locations for a defence school of music. The role of the defence intelligence centre, and the suitability of its current location, is being examined in the context of the continuing study into defence intelligence, which is being carried out under "Front Line First".

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the requirements in terms of *(a)* training on a second instrument and *(b)* orchestral training for the bandsmen who played on board the royal yacht Britannia and for heads of state at the recent D-day commemorations; and which military school of music provides these requirements.

Mr. Hanley: All members of the Royal Marines band service are currently trained at Deal and are required to learn a military band instrument and an orchestral instrument. The members of the Royal Yacht band are drawn from the Royal Marines band Portsmouth and are able to perform as a marching band, a concert band, a dance band and as an orchestra.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the consultation procedure to be followed in relation to proposals involving the future of the Royal Marines school of music at Deal; if he will list and place in the Library the investment appraisals which *(a)* have been carried out and *(b)* are to be carried out; and if he will make available accounting and other relevant information concerning (i) retaining the Royal Marines school of music in Deal and (ii) establishing a defence school of music in Deal.

Mr. Hanley: The proposal to transfer the training of Royal Marines musicians from Deal will be subject to the same consultative period applicable to the whole series of "Front Line First" initiatives which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced to the House on 14 July 1994; this lasts until 14 October. The proposal has resulted from a detailed study of the current costs of military music provision and music training in all three services. Further work is in hand to establish whether there is scope to conduct the initial training of military musicians through bursary or scholarship schemes at civilian colleges of music.

Intelligence Centre, Templar Barracks

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the annual economic contribution of the intelligence centre at Templar barracks to East Kent including the value of goods and services purchased from local suppliers and direct and indirect employment.

Mr. Hanley: The defence intelligence centre buys in local goods and services to the approximate value of £220,000 a year. The centre employs 108 civilian and 136 military personnel, the majority of whom live locally and so contribute to the local economy.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the number of *(a)* civilian and *(b)* military personnel employed in the school of intelligence and the security school at the Templar barracks intelligence centre; and what is the maximum accommodation requirement for students during the course of a normal year.

Mr. Hanley: The defence intelligence and security school is an integral part of the defence intelligence centre. The centre employs 108 civilian and 136 military personnel of which 21 civilian and 45 military personnel work in the defence intelligence and security school. The centre has a throughput of approximately 3,000 students a year, around 2,500 of which attend courses at the defence intelligence and security school. The maximum number of students requiring accommodation at any one time is around 300.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the construction of a channel tunnel high-speed rail link will have on whether the intelligence centre can remain in Templar barracks at Ashford.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the intelligence centre based at Templar barracks in Ashford and the long-term suitability of that location.

Mr. Hanley: The future organisation of defence intelligence is still being examined as part of continuing defence costs study into defence intelligence, which, as indicated in the report "Front Line First", is due to report by the end of July. The role of the defence intelligence centre at Templar barracks, Ashford, and the long-term suitability of that location in the light of the channel tunnel rail link, is being addressed in that context.

Portland Bases

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money he has planned to spend in transferring facilities from Portland naval base into Portland naval air station; how much has already been spent; and what plans he has to reduce this spending consequential on the announcement of his intention to close the air station by 1999.

Mr. Hanley: The original estimate of the cost of transferring facilities to Portland naval station following the decision to close Portland naval base was £3,900,000, of which £83,000 has been spent to date. The current estimate of total costs has been revised to £2,900,000 to reflect the planned closure of the naval air station.

Abbey Wood Building

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned spending on providing, equipping and staffing the new Ministry of Defence building at Abbey Wood; how much has already been spent; and how many staff could be accommodated at Abbey Wood.

Mr. Aitken: The estimated works cost of the Abbey Wood development, inclusive of site acquisition, construction, fitting out, professional works management fees and VAT is £254·136 million at 1993 prices with an additional £93 million for non-works elements, inclusive of staff relocation and removal/recommissioning of IT systems existing at the time of collocation. The construction programme continues to proceed within budget and a total of £72·138 million, at the same price base, has been approved for payment to date. As a result of the use of more stringent space standards and work undertaken in support of the defence costs study, it is anticipated that a maximum of some 5,700 personnel could be accommodated within the existing scheme. The estimate for the non-works costs will be revisited in the light of the recently announced decisions resulting from the defence costs study.

Naval Support Command

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed by the naval support command; where they are currently located; and where it is planned to locate these staff.

Mr. Hanley: At 1 April 1994 there were some 24,000 staff employed in the naval support command—NSC—at a variety of locations throughout the United Kingdom, overseas and at sea. The largest concentrations were in the naval bases and, for headquarters staff, in the Bath area. Some locations will be affected by the defence costs study and details are contained in the report "Front Line First". For those elements of the headquarters staff who need to be collocated, we are looking at the most suitable site in the Bath/Bristol area.

Capital Projects (Portland and Weymouth)

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list and give the cost of the major capital projects undertaken in Portland and Weymouth over the past 10 years, with, where appropriate, the payback period for these projects as calculated when these projects were approved by the Treasury.

Mr. Hanley: In the past 10 years there have been 19 capital works projects—over 300,000 in value—in the Portland and Weymouth area, at a total cost of £44·5 million. Only one project, the building of the new wardroom and senior rates' mess at HMS Osprey, which cost £30 million, required Treasury approval. Details of the payback period are not available because the Property Services Agency—PSA—was responsible for the submission to Treasury in 1985-86 and the records are not available.

The projects were as follows:

Capital projects in Portland/Weymouth

		£000
DRA		
1992	DRA Southwell telephone exchange	535
1994	DRA Bincleaves refurbishment	620
HMNB		
1985	RM building improvements	677
1985	Shore to ship services	974
1986	Rotherham Road Construction	940
1986	New build for QHM	927
1986	Portland Bill transmitter upgrade	570
1986	Verne reservoir and pump house	1,000
1988	FOST building extension	1,500
1992	Connections to local authority sewer	484
1992	Breakwater maintenance	690
HMS Osprey		
1988	Osprey Wardroom/Senior Rates' mess	30,006
1990	Storage	1,604
1991	Secondary surveillance radar	336
1990	Permanent DWO	1,186
1989	Car parking	510
1990	Security enhancements	312
1994	Hillside stability monitoring	412
1994	Hardy site remedial works	1,175

Helicopters

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned spending on new hangars and facilities to accommodate the Merlin EH101 helicopters at Culdrose; how much money has already been spent; what other plans the Ministry of Defence has to expand helicopter facilities throughout the United Kingdom; and how many helicopters the Ministry of Defence has now and plans to have by 1999.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of new hangars and facilities that would be required to accommodate the Merlin EH101 at Culdrose naval air station is estimated to be between £80,000,000 to £100,000,000, none of which has yet been spent. Helicopter facilities elsewhere in the United Kingdom may change depending on the investment appraisal of the options for a joint helicopter basic flying training centre and decisions on future RAF support helicopters which have yet to be taken. The number of helicopters currently owned by my Department is published annually in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". The number of helicopters that we will have in 1999 depends on the equipment decisions which have yet to be taken.

Farnborough Airfield

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of flying at Farnborough airfield beyond 2000.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence is committed to making Farnborough airfield available to the Society of British Aerospace Companies for the biennial airshow until the year 2000. Against the background of the collocation of procurement executive flying at Boscombe Down, the concentration of Defence Research Agency activity on part of the Farnborough site and the consequent requirement to dispose of the remainder of the site, an interdepartmental group of officials has been set up, under the chairmanship of the Department of Trade and Industry, to consider the future of Farnborough airfield, including its use for the SBAC airshow.

Aircraft and Equipment

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which foreign Government received the aircraft and equipment listed under Appropriation Accounts, class 1, vote 2, "Other Notes".

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer, 18 July 1994]:* The Government of Saudi Arabia.

Menwith Hill Station

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has, under the provisions of part IV, paragraph 21 of circular 18/84, to refer to the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine whether the development should proceed of two radomes, support buildings, security fencing and extension to a service road at Menwith hill station, Harrogate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The local planning authority raised no objection to this development. It did, however, draw to my Department's attention a number of objections received by the local council. We have considered the substance of these pursuant to paragraph 21 of part IV of circular 18/84 and have concluded that there is nothing in these objections that would make it appropriate to refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ferranti/ISC Fraud

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all those charged with offences relating to the Ferranti/ISC fraud; and if he will list, in each case, the pleas entered and the sentences imposed.

The Attorney-General: The investigation by the Serious Fraud Office commenced in September 1989 and was carried out in close co-operation with the United States prosecuting authorities because it was apparent that all the potential defendants were United States citizens residing in the United States.

At the conclusion of the investigation, a United States grand jury indicted 17 individuals and three corporations on charges of fraud. They included James Guerin, the former deputy chairman of Ferranti International Signals plc—the company which resulted from the merger of Ferranti and ISC in 1987.

In December 1991, Guerin and subsequently various other defendants pleaded guilty before the federal court in Philadelphia to offences involving fraud in respect of the merged company, committed both in the United Kingdom and the USA. All offences which might have been the subject of a United Kingdom trial were fully encompassed in the United States indictment which alleged, inter alia, the creation of fictitious contracts, with attendant false accounting designed to bolster the share price of ISC and achieve the merger with Ferranti. Accordingly, no extraditions can be, or have been, sought and no persons were charged in the United Kingdom with any offences in relation to the Ferranti investigation. Guerin was sentenced in June 1992 to a total of 15 years imprisonment and confiscation of substantial personal assets. Other defendants have yet to be sentenced and at least one trial is still pending.

At the conclusion of the investigation stage, the United States Attorney for Philadelphia issued the following statement:

"The US Government received extensive co-operation and assistance from Britain's Serious Fraud Office and the Metropolitan Police. Their efforts exemplify the level of international law enforcement co-operation essential for the prosecution of criminal activity that ignores national boundaries."

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General (1) how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(3) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

The Attorney-General: No special advisers have either joined or left my Department during the last five years.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 July 1994

EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have (i) participated in job clubs each year since the scheme started and (ii) have attended job search seminars both in Great Britain and in each region in each quarter since their inception.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions asking for information about the number of men and women participating in Jobclub and job search seminars since their inception. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

In our reply of 8 March 1994, we gave you details of men and women participating in Jobclubs in each year between April 1986 to December 1993 and the number of men and women attending job search seminars in each quarter between August 1991 to January 1994.

The updated information for Jobclub covering the period January to March 1994 is in Table A with earlier figures repeated for ease of reference. The updated information for job search seminars, including the regional breakdown, covers the period August 1991 to April 1994 is in Table B.

As we explained in our earlier reply, we do not keep statistics on the gender of job search seminar participants. Results from sample survey of the gender of Jobclub members in 1993-94 are now available and have been used to calculate the figures shown in Table B.

I hope this is helpful.

Table A—Total number of Jobclub participants: Proportion of Males and Females

Year	*Throughflow*	*Males*	*Females*
1985-86	[1](1,994)	n/a	n/a
1986-87	[1](20,606)	15,867	4,739
1987-88	105,677	80,314	25,363
1988-89	132,262	97,874	34,388
1989-90	140,095	102,269	37,826
1990-91	134,712	102,381	32,331
1991-92	176,140	140,470	35,670
1992-93	216,679	173,343	43,336
1993-94	231,325	182,747	48,578

[1]Denotes estimated figures.

Table B—Number of attenders in job search seminars from August 1991

Quarter ending	*Regions*									*Total*
	NR	*YH*	*EM*	*LSE*	*SW*	*OW*	*WM*	*NW*	*SC*	
September 1991	126	—	9	360	126	111	142	272	128	1,274
December 1991	675	987	1,173	4,059	1,409	884	998	1,495	2,107	13,787
March 1992	1,238	1,650	1,705	5,937	2,315	962	1,587	2,123	2,053	19,570
June 1992	1,156	1,499	1,789	6,321	2,217	950	1,740	2,492	2,015	20,179
September 1992	1,174	1,744	1,828	7,158	2,355	1,076	1,707	2,818	2,267	22,127
December 1992	1,227	2,083	1,855	7,567	2,421	1,193	1,771	2,890	1,959	22,966
March 1993	1,396	1,976	2,246	7,914	1,005	690	1,120	2,930	1,658	20,935
June 1993	1,023	1,974	1,813	6,017	712	635	936	2,041	1,368	16,519
September 1993	747	1,554	1,165	6,611	1,392	684	1,051	1,482	1,163	15,849
December 1993	847	1,726	1,110	6,762	1,791	547	1,463	1,437	1,485	17,168
March 1994	954	1,774	1,069	8,209	3,040	601	1,194	1,326	1,113	19,280

Key
NR=Northern Region.
EM=East Midlands and Eastern.
SW=South West.
WM=West Midlands.
OS=Office for Scotland.
YH=Yorkshire and Humberside.
LSE=London and South East.
OW=Office for Wales.
NW=North West.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the top five parliamentary constituencies with *(a)* the highest level of unemployment and *(b)* the lowest level, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Official unemployment rates are not available for constituencies and it is only unemployment rates that provide meaningful rankings for areas with different sized work forces. Rates are available by travel-to-work areas and by region.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Liverpool, Riverside.

Miss Widdecombe: In June 1994, claimant unemployment in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency stood at 6,748 the lowest monthly level since constituency figures became available in June 1983. These figures are on the unadjusted basis and therefore reflect seasonal factors and discontinuities in the count.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans Her Majesty's Government have for reducing the level of unemployment on Merseyside.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for six-monthly periods from January 1979 to date how many of the vacancies notified to jobcentres in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each region were (i) full-time and (ii) part-time and (1) permanent and (2) temporary.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Job Workshops

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have attended job review workshops in each month since their inception; and what are the regional figures for attendance by (i) men and (ii) women at these workshops.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of men and women who have attended Job Review Workshops in each month since their inception and by region. I am replying in the Chief Executives absence.

Job Review Workshops were launched in October 1991 to help newly unemployed people review their career path and set clear job goals suited to their skills, experience and preferences. The programme is particularly suitable for professional, managerial and executive jobseekers who want to consider alternative careers.

Statistical data was collected monthly until March 1993. From April 1993 information has been collected on a quarterly basis.

I attach tables which show, by region, the number of men and women attending the Workshops since their inception until March 1994.

I hope this is helpful.

Job Review Workshops
April 1993—March 1994

Region Male/Female	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*	*Regional Totals*
Northern					
Male	207	217	261	193	878
Female	60	68	84	67	279
Yorkshire and Humberside					
Male	693	707	662	614	2,676
Female	136	166	186	161	649
East Midlands					
Male	713	725	626	586	2,650
Female	174	155	124	136	589
London and South East					
Male	2,868	3,033	3,185	3,174	12,260
Female	823	951	957	1,040	3,771
South West					
Male	759	594	692	1,154	3,199
Female	186	167	169	315	837
Wales					
Male	267	207	249	293	1,016
Female	55	45	75	76	251
West Midlands					
Male	448	453	465	458	1,824
Female	83	90	129	131	433
North West					
Male	675	582	661	667	2,585
Female	156	166	140	168	630
Scotland					
Male	506	441	547	570	2,064
Female	153	168	190	191	702
National					
Male	7,136	6,959	7,348	7,709	29,152
Female	1,826	1,976	2,054	2,285	8,141

Job review workshops

Region Male/Female	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Regional totals
April 1992—March 1993													
Northern													
Male	85	96	55	78	46	67	127	115	85	84	48	86	972
Female	19	28	23	14	28	11	56	38	11	31	8	16	283
Yorkshire and Humberside													
Male	175	245	148	200	176	187	262	251	183	250	175	225	2,477
Female	41	58	40	43	33	29	63	105	76	74	41	38	641
East Midlands													
Male	201	251	226	239	225	203	308	205	217	308	254	277	2,914
Female	36	69	41	53	39	43	51	52	23	38	57	71	573
London and South East													
Male	849	990	1,018	1,379	1,342	1,142	1,160	1,189	960	1,287	1,839	1,153	14,308
Female	257	233	262	402	393	327	334	358	305	382	489	357	4,099
South West													
Male	192	302	251	341	194	275	326	334	247	337	282	217	3,298
Female	46	74	40	72	30	54	73	81	51	84	69	59	733
Wales													
Male	42	183	72	126	43	117	106	124	64	134	48	97	1,156
Female	6	24	17	33	11	10	20	33	11	32	10	23	230
West Midlands													
Male	165	215	169	182	102	167	229	228	143	204	200	202	2,206
Female	24	53	24	44	15	18	38	32	20	27	39	45	379
North West													
Male	197	309	236	268	156	314	316	329	264	318	268	350	3,325
Female	46	68	38	63	45	60	72	64	41	62	60	48	667
Scotland													
Male	198	168	439	500	326	230	199	211	131	198	125	278	3,003
Female	53	41	51	62	58	58	51	69	36	50	37	85	651
National													
Male	2,104	2,759	2,614	3,313	2,610	2,702	3,033	2,986	2,294	3,120	3,239	2,885	33,659
Female	528	648	536	786	652	610	758	832	574	780	810	742	8,256
October 1991—March 1992													
Northern													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	37	64	28	93	100	103	425
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	15	8	20	33	19	105
Yorkshire and Humberside													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	34	93	126	153	185	270	861
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	27	32	31	32	51	190
East Midlands													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	150	159	276	231	252	1,077
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	27	25	46	39	46	186
London and South East													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	286	807	653	993	1,190	1,714	5,643
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	79	208	149	233	363	413	1,443
South West													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	163	173	226	229	280	1,082
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	27	33	56	54	46	230
Wales													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	105	117	70	112	166	154	724
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	17	7	24	33	33	122
West Midlands													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	62	98	107	146	232	659
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	13	25	30	56	134
North West													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	159	117	192	221	279	976
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	39	16	45	51	69	222
Scotland													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	202	99	150	264	194	949
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	90	30	45	88	57	330
National													
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	544	1,817	1,523	2,302	2,732	3,478	12,396
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	158	453	313	525	723	790	2,962

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in job plan workshops in (i) Great Britain and (ii) each region since their inception; and what evidence he has of positive outcomes nationally and regionally for those who attend job plan workshops.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A G Johnson to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of men and women who have attended Jobplan workshops since their inception and what evidence there is of positive outcomes for those attending. You asked for this information both for Great Britain and for each region. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

It may help if I explain that Jobplan workshops are for people who have been unemployed for a year who refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department programme at their Restart interview. Jobplan aims to help people compete more successfully for jobs and opportunities by allowing them to review their strengths and skills, establish clear job goals and draw up a comprehensive Action Plan, setting out the steps they need to take to get back to work. People who leave Jobplan may go directly into jobs or, where appropriate, onto other options such as training or Jobclub, which will help them back into work. The rate of referral to jobs or other options is reported by Jobplan Workshop providers and has been a key element in monitoring their performance.

Jobplan Workshops were launched in April 1993. The tables in annex 1 and 2 show by region the number of men and women attending Jobplan and the rate of referrals to jobs or other opportunities achieved for 1993-94 and for April and May 1994. As you will see during 1993-94, 94 per cent. of workshop completers were referred to a job or an Employment Department employment or training programme or another option to help them back to work. This figure has risen to 96 per cent. in the first couple of months of this operational year. Comprehensive research into the longer term outcomes from Jobplan workshops in their first year of operation will be available later this year.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobplan Workshops—Attenders and Positive Outcomes 1993-94

	Attenders Male	Female	Positive Outcome Rate (Referrals) Per cent.
Northern	14,124	2,613	91
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,568	3,489	94
East Midlands and Eastern	21,737	4,254	92
London and South East	96,755	21,425	95
South West	19449	4,073	93
Wales	9,414	1,655	90
West Midlands	23,286	4,803	94
North West	26,472	5,361	95
Scotland	20,316	4,013	91
National	250,121	51,686	94

Jobplan Workshops—Attenders and Positive Outcomes April and May 1994

	Attenders Male	Female	Positive Outcome Rate (Referrals) Per cent.
Northern	2,481	437	92
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,446	612	96
East Midlands and Eastern	3,038	611	93
London and South East	11,807	2,747	98
South West	2,798	580	94
Wales	1,693	270	94
West Midlands	3,210	721	96
North West	5,169	966	95
Scotland	3,280	598	92
National	36,922	7,542	96

Community Action

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have participated in community action in each month since its inception; and how many of these found work in Great Britain and in each region.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the numbers of men and women who have participated in Community Action in each month since its inception and the numbers of men and women, in each region and in Great Britain, who have found work as a result of participation. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

The numbers of male and female participants each month are given in annex 1.

Annex 2 shows the number of men and women who have left the programme and the numbers who have *immediately* entered paid employment on leaving for the period 27 July 1993 to 27 May 1994. This is the latest date for which figures are available. We expect that many more people will enter paid employment in the period following participation as a direct result of the help they have received through the programme.

I hope this is helpful.

Table showing the number of men and women who have participated in Community Action in each month since the programme began

Month	Men	Women	Total
July 1993	35	1	36
August 1993	96	13	109
September 1993	258	35	293
October 1993	1,083	207	1,290
November 1993	2,547	566	3,113
December 1993	4,070	857	4,927
January 1994	6,397	1,464	7,861
February 1994	11,733	2,747	14,480
March 1994	18,914	4,467	23,381
April 1994	21,111	5,287	26,398
May 1994	23,505	5,966	29,471

Annex 2

Table showing the numbers of men and women who have left community action and the numbers who have directly entered paid employment 27 July 1993 to 27 May 1994

	North West	Yorkshire and Humber-side	East Midlands and East	London and South East	South West	West	West Midlands	North West	South	Great Britain
Males Leavers	416	570	556	1,640	579	281	675	966	501	6,184
Female Leavers	66	115	118	460	105	82	196	160	117	1,419
Total Leavers	482	685	674	2,100	684	363	871	1,126	618	7,603
Males into work	42	70	73	259	95	38	79	60	45	761
Females into work	6	26	26	79	21	11	25	19	12	225
Total into work	48	96	99	338	116	49	104	79	57	986

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to speed up the publication of results from the quarterly labour force survey.

Miss Widdecombe: Following a programme of development work carried out during the last year, methods have now been developed which will make it possible, following a short running-in period, to release key results from the quarterly labour force survey only one and a half months after the end of each survey period.

The first accelerated LFS results—for the spring—March to May—1994 quarter will be published on

Wednesday 17 August; results for the summer—June to August—quarter will be published on Wednesday 12 October; for the autumn quarter in mid-January and so on.

The figures will cover total employment, including the service sector and self-employment; full and part-time employment; unemployment on the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definition; and economic activity and ILO unemployment rates. Regional-territorial and broad industry analyses will also be provided.

Fuller data from the LFS will continue to be published to the existing timetable. For example, the full results for the spring 1994 quarter will be published in September and the full results for the summer quarter will be published in December.

Training

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions and criteria for assessment are being used in respect of young partially disabled people in respect of the modern apprenticeship scheme announced in last year's Budget.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State made it clear that he wants to see modern apprenticeships open equally to all young people, and this is being built into all the developing frameworks. We shall monitor this aspect closely as modern apprenticeships are implemented in general.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was *(a)* the total amount spent by his Department for training in Great Britain and in each region in each year since 1989-90, *(b)* the expected outturn in 1993-94 and *(c)* plans for 1994-95 all in (i) 1993-94 prices and (ii) cash terms;

(2) what was the total expenditure by his Department on youth training in each of the last four years in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1993-94 prices and in each region; and what are the expected national and regional outturns for 1994-95 in cash terms and in 1993-94 prices;

(3) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have attended a training for work courses in Great Britain and in each region;

(4) what was the expenditure on youth training in Great Britain, both nationally and regionally, in cash terms and in 1993-94 prices in each year since 1989-90; and what are the expected outturns for 1993-94;

(5) what was the total expenditure by his Department for *(a)* employment training, *(b)* employment action and *(c)* training for work in each of the last four years and in each region in (i) cash terms and (ii) 1993-94 prices; and what are the expected national and regional outturns for 1994-95;

(6) what are his most recent estimates of the amount spent on training by *(a)* private employers, *(b)* public employers, *(c)* Government and *(d)* individuals in each of the last 10 years;

(7) what was the expenditure on *(a)* training for work, *(b)* employment training and its predecessors and *(c)* employment action in Great Britain, both nationally and regionally in (i) cash terms and (ii) 1993-94 prices in each year since 1989-90; and what are the expected outcomes for 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Tony Lloyd: *To ask the Secretary of State for* Employment how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have achieved NVQs at each level for each quarter since their inception.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all those organisations approved by the National Council on Vocational Qualifications for external verification of such qualification at each of levels I, II and III.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Work Start

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many of those who participated in the work start pilots have gone on to find jobs in each region of Great Britain;

(2) what was the total cost of the work start pilots; and what was their cost in each region.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Investors in People

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many companies have signed up for investors in people; and how many have achieved this status, in each month since its inception.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Business Start-up and Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated, both nationally and regionally, in *(a)* business start-up and *(b)* the enterprise allowance scheme in each year since their inception.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess.

I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people in the United Kingdom and in each region of working age are neither in work nor training; and what percentage of the disabled population in this age group this represents.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what transitional protection will be afforded to non-employed status trainees hitherto eligible to benefit under his Department's analogous industrial injuries scheme, following the enactment of the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Act 1994; and what transitional arrangements will apply for participants in other schemes funded through his Department and affected by this legislation.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

16 and 17-year-olds

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many 16 and 17-year-olds were not in full time education, training or employment in each quarter since January 1988;

(2) how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in employment in each quarter since January 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Youth Credits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were using youth credits to obtain training in each month since the scheme's inception in (i) Great Britain and (ii) each region.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Agricultural Workers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to denounce International Labour Organisation conventions 99 and 101, covering minimum wages and holiday entitlements of agricultural workers.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer prior to the summer recess. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a reply as soon as possible and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Small Claims Courts

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the implications of the recent ruling in Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd., for the right of plaintiffs, making a personal injury claim of under £1,000, to choose whether their claim is heard in the county court or small claims court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under order 19 of the county court rules any claim not exceeding £1,000 is automatically referred to arbitration on the filing of a defence. In these circumstances, recoverable costs are strictly limited. However, if the court considers, for example, that the case is one of exceptional complexity, it may order a trial in open court, where full costs may be recoverable. The recent judgment of the Court of Appeal in Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd. made it clear that where, in the opinion of the court, a claim had been deliberately overstated to avoid automatic reference to arbitration, the court could limit the recoverable costs to those allowed under order 19, rule 4.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the implications of the recent ruling in Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd., for the possibility, for the future, of limited costs being made available in those lower value personal injury claims heard in the small claims court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department recently consulted on proposals for new procedures to apply to personal injury claims not exceeding £1,000. We are currently evaluating the responses to this consultation and are taking into account the implications for our proposals of the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the case of Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd. and related appeals.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the implications of the recent ruling in Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd., in respect of the referral of all personal injury claims valued at under £1,000 being referred to arbitration; and what plans there are to introduce a right of appeal for plaintiffs who believe their claims have been undervalued.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under order 19 of the county court rules, any claim not exceeding £1,000 is automatically referred to arbitration on the filing of a defence. The recent judgment of the Court of Appeal in Afzal *v.* Ford Motor Company Ltd. made it clear that,

where, in the opinion of the court, a claim had been deliberately overstated to avoid such automatic reference, the court could limit the recoverable costs to those allowed under order 19, rule 4.

Order 19, rule 8 explains the circumstances when a party may apply to set aside an arbitrator's award. There are no plans to introduce additional rights of appeal.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy that there will be no increase in the small claims court limit until consultation by his Department on lower value personal injury claims has been concluded and any resulting change in the small claims court rules implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The consultation period for the proposals to apply to small personal injury claims not exceeding £1,000 closed earlier this year. The responses are being analysed and evaluated. The Lord Chancellor will review the small claims limit later this year. Full consultation will take place before a final decision on a new limit is made.

Disabled People

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the resultant additional expenses can be reimbursed by the appropriate administrative department when the hearing of a case at a magistrates court involving a disabled person has to be resited because of difficulties of access for that disabled person.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Additional travelling costs properly incurred by a disabled witness or successful defendant may be allowed from public funds. In any other case, reimbursement would be a matter for the local magistrates courts committee.

Unpaid Compensation Orders

Mr. Bates: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many compensation orders awarded in 1990, 1991 and 1992 by *(a)* Teesside Crown court, *(b)* Teesside magistrates court and *(c)* Guisborough magistrates court remain unpaid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available centrally.

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list for each year from 1980 all cases receiving legal aid in excess of *(a)* £500,000 and *(b)* £1,000,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. In November 1993, my Department issued a leaflet for small businesses which explains the possible advantages and disadvantages of using court action to recover debts.

My Department's standard conditions of contract contain a clause undertaking to pay contractors within 30 days of receipt and agreement of invoices. A further clause requires contractors to include in any subcontracting agreement a term that they will pay the subcontractor within 30 days. Although these clauses will be included in contracts with all outside companies, the effects of such good practices will clearly be more important to small businesses.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many appeals to immigration adjudicators were *(a)* allowed and *(b)* dismissed in 1993 and the first quarter of 1994, broken down according to the nationality of the appellant and the type of decision appealed against.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information given in the tables shows the number of appeals dismissed or allowed by type of decision appealed against and country of origin. Information about the nationality of individual appellants is not available; however, the tables show the country from which appeals originate.

January—March 1994

Appeal Categories	*Bangladesh*		*Ghana*		*India*		*Jamaica*		*Nigeria*		*Pakistan*		*EC*		*All other countries*	
	All	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*	*All*	*Dis*
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	—	2	1	2	—	3	—	2	—	10	—	2	—	—	1	14
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	—	5	—	2	—	6	1	18	1	5	—	8	—	—	15	207
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	3	66	1	5	3	18	—	—	3	11	2	13	—	—	9	18
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes *(not husbands, wives, fiances or financees)*	23	176	28	145	140	325	4	33	94	377	187	546	1	—	168	772

Appeal Categories	Bangladesh		Ghana		India		Jamaica		Nigeria		Pakistan		EC		All other countries	
	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment, Business or Independent Means *(not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)*	—	1	—	—	3	4	—	—	—	3	1	3	—	—	2	15
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by *wives* and *children*, other dependent relatives and returning residents	9	138	—	12	25	49	3	5	3	14	42	80	—	—	44	113
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	—	—	—	—	3	5	—	—	—	1	1	2	—	—	6	12
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	14	35	—	—	21	39	2	6	2	6	106	180	—	—	12	37
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	—	1	—	1	14	25	—	—	—	3	5	10	—	—	1	7
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S.14(2))	—	8	—	6	—	19	—	3	—	10	—	31	—	—	12	106
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	—	40	5	95	15	144	7	102	12	404	14	201	—	—	26	742
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	1	11	3	42	1	28	—	27	4	159	2	32	—	—	2	110
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	1	—	—	2	7
14. Giving of Removal Directions	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	—	—	2	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

All: Allowed.
Dis: Dismissed.

1993

Appeal Categories	Bangladesh		Ghana		India		Jamaica		Nigeria		Pakistan		EC		All other countries	
	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis
1. Exclusion—Appeal at Port	2	20	—	23	7	20	—	8	1	22	7	27	—	13	2	74
2. Exclusion—External Appeals	—	23	1	8	2	21	5	57	2	42	2	22	—	1	50	680
3. Refusal of Certificate Entitlement	29	139	2	9	9	27	3	8	13	29	5	21	—	—	20	80
4. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Temporary purposes *(not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)*	125	629	114	43	609	1,164	62	225	329	1,362	719	1,762	—	—	673	295
5. Refusal of Entry Clearance for Employment, Business or Independent Means *(not husbands, wives, fiances or fiancees)*	—	5	—	3	9	26	—	—	3	12	19	51	—	—	13	99
6. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by *wives* and *children*, other dependent relatives and returning residents	83	477	7	40	68	213	10	31	14	37	81	32	—	4	122	293
7. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by female fiancees	5	7	—	3	16	30	2	6	1	1	5	16	—	—	31	42
8. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by husbands	35	92	3	10	71	162	3	15	5	23	316	663	1	—	49	92
9. Refusal of Entry Clearance requested by male fiances	10	17	—	2	65	92	10	11	—	2	59	86	—	—	5	21
10. Variation of Landing Conditions (including curtailment of stay or duration or conditions of leave to remain given to persons previously exempted (S.14(2))	12	5	6	5	4	101	—	35	2	101	3	113	—	6	40	287
11. Refusal to Vary Leave to Enter	9	118	13	27	18	473	12	249	35	879	19	586	—	2	59	1,823

Appeal Categories	Bangladesh		Ghana		India		Jamaica		Nigeria		Pakistan		EC		All other countries	
	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis	All	Dis
12. Decision to make Deportation Order	4	22	5	17	5	117	—	55	8	338	1	112	—	—	18	318
13. Refusal to Revoke Deportation Order	—	—	—	5	1	4	—	1	—	4	—	3	—	—	—	8
14. Giving of Romoval Directions	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	6	—	2	—	—	3	10
15. Destination Only Appeal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

All: Allowed.
Dis: Dismissed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many appeals to the Immigration Appeal tribunal were *(a)* allowed and *(b)* dismissed in 1993 and the first quarter of 1994.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1993, 350 appeals to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal were allowed and 361 were dismissed. In the first quarter of 1994, 41 appeals have been allowed and 59 have been dismissed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many appellants in appeals under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 have been *(a)* unrepresented, *(b)* represented by the Refugee Legal Centre, *(c)* represented by other voluntary organisations and *(d)* represented by solicitors or counsel, by hearing centre, since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. No separate record is kept of how—if at all—individual appellants are represented.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many applications to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal under (i) the Immigration Act 1971 and (ii) the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 26 July 1993, nine applications to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal under the Immigration Act 1971 that have been granted; 58 have been refused.

Of the applications made under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, five have been granted and 16 refused.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications for leave for judicial review of decisions of a special adjudicator made under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 that a case was without foundation have been *(a)* made, *(b)* granted or *(c)* refused since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 26 July 1993, 13 applications for leave for judicial review of decisions of a special adjudicator in "without foundation" cases have been made. Of these, six were granted leave, of which three were later withdrawn, and one was dismissed at a substantive hearing. Four applications were refused and three have yet to be considered.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what is the average delay, listed by each immigration appeals hearing centre (i) between receiving the explanatory statement and papers about a case *(a)* from a British post overseas and *(b)* from the Home Office and sending those papers to an appellant or his or her authorised representative and (ii) between the hearing of an immigration appeal by an adjudicator and the dispatch of the determination to the appellant or authorised representative.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Copies of the explanatory statement and related papers are dispatched from the immigration appellate authority's principal office at Thanet house in London to the appellant or his or her authorised representative. The IAA aims to dispatch copies of the case papers to the parties within five days in 95 per cent. of cases. This target is achieved regularly and often exceeded.

In non-asylum cases, the adjudicator's determination issues to the parties, on average, within six to eight weeks of the hearing. For appeals determined under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, the average time from the hearing to the issue of the determination is eight to nine days.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many appeals under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 have been *(a)* lodged, *(b)* heard by special adjudicators, *(c)* allowed, *(d)* dismissed and *(e)* dismissed but with a recommendation to the Home Office to reconsider, at each hearing centre.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Some 2,283 appeals have been lodged to date under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. The table shows the outcome of those cases which have been determined, at each hearing centre. The figures exclude cases that are part heard or have been adjourned.

	Allowed	Dismissed	Withdrawn
Hatton Cross	34	802	12
Thanet House	4	117	7
Birmingham	1	91	—
Glasgow	—	20	2

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, in how many appeals under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 the appellants have been *(a)* refused leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal, *(b)* granted leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal and *(c)* heard by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal; and in how many cases heard the appeal was (i) allowed, (ii) dismissed with a recommendation or (iii) dismissed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of appeals under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 where the

appellant has been refused leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal is 607. Leave to appeal has been granted in 183 cases. Of those, eight appeals have so far been allowed; 80 have been remitted for rehearing by an adjudicator; and 33 have been dismissed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many appeals against claims for asylum certified by the Secretary of State to be unfounded have been *(a)* lodged, *(b)* heard by special adjudicators, *(c)* allowed and *(d)* dismissed, by appeals hearing centres since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 26 July 1993, 766 appeals against claims for asylum certified by the Secretary of State to be unfounded have been lodged. These cases are determined at Hatton Cross in west London. To date, 20 have been allowed, 398 dismissed, 11 withdrawn, and 86 referred back to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many applications to the Court of Appeal for leave to appeal in cases under (i) the Immigration Act 1971 and (ii) the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 26 July 1993, three applications have been made to the Court of Appeal for leave to appeal in cases under the Immigration Act 1971. Of these, one application was dismissed by consent of the parties, one was refused and the other has not yet been heard. In the same period, seven applications have been made under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. Of these, one was allowed, one was refused and five have not yet been heard.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, how many judicial reviews of decisions of a special adjudicator made under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 that a case was without foundation have been *(a)* heard, *(b)* granted relief and *(c)* dismissed since 26 July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since 26 July 1993, one such judicial review was heard and was dismissed.

TRANSPORT

Public Safety Zone Policy

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review public safety zone policy and its administration.

Mr. Norris: I have asked officials to review public safety zone policy and its administration. The terms of reference for the review are as follows:

Review of Public Safety Zone Policy and Administration Terms of Reference

1. The review will consider how the Public Safety zone policy set out in Department of the Environment Circular 2/92 and Scottish Development Department Circular 16/82, and its administration, are working in practice; and whether changes are needed. It will cover in particular:

(i) the criteria for establishing Public Safety zones, including
- the level of third party risk against which the policy should seek to provide protection;
- the relevant number and type of aircraft movements;
- the size and shape of the Zones.

(ii) the policy towards existing and new development in the Zones, including
- the posibility of different policies for different parts of the Zones, or different levels of risk;
- the policy towards roads and railways in Public Safety Zones;
- how the policy can be translated into clear guidance for administration.

(iii) the administration of the policy.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce the location for intermediate stations on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Watts: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Northolt Airfield

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the status and purpose of current developments at Northolt airfield; what was the result of his consultation with industry on the way in which the private sector could be involved in making better use of the existing capacity for civil operations at RAF Northolt; what arrangements he is making to consult local residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We are undertaking a consultation with business aviation users and operators on the ways in which the private sector might become involved in making better use of the existing capacity at RAF Northolt through development of a civil enclave. This is in line with the policy set out in the 1985 White Paper. The purpose of the present consultation is to find out what might be a commercially feasible way forward within current operating constraints at RAF Northolt. The consultation period ends on 19 August. The defence lands agent will be discussing this with local authority officials. We are not consulting on the basis of any change in the limits on civil use at Northolt and therefore the consultation is not intended to be any broader at this stage. Should a development be proposed for such an enclave, then planning permission would be required from the local authority, with an opportunity for all views to be taken into account.

Airports

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on future airport development covering existing airports in southern England.

Mr. Norris: The last major statement on airport development was in the 1985 White Paper "Airports Policy" Cmnd 9542. Although this remains relevant today, the Government have acknowledged that it needs to be updated. The recent consultation on the report of the runway capacity to serve the south east—RUCATSE—working group provides a focus for such a statement and we intend to make this before the end of the year.

Disabled Drivers

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study his Department has made of the number of fines imposed on severely disabled drivers for parking in central London; what assessment he has made

of whether the level is increasing or decreasing; what action he has taken or will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department has not carried out any such studies and has no plans to do so at the moment.

Underground (Infrastructure)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the London Regional Passengers Committee about tunnels and their integrity, water pumps, signals and rolling stock and the effects of these factors on train speeds and thus on overall service; what recommendations the committee has made to him; and if he will publish this information.

Mr. Norris: The LRPC regularly makes representations to me on a wide range of issues to do with passenger services on the underground. All the committee's proceedings and representations to the Department are in the public domain.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which stations or sections of tunnel on London Underground do not meet the standards set by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Norris: It is for London Underground to ensure the safety of those who work on their railway or those—for example, passengers—who are affected by their work in accordance with the appropriate legislation. Her Majesty's railway inspectorate enforces health and safety on the underground and monitors to see that recommendations arising from its routine inspections are acted upon.

Barge, South Hams

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to complete the removal of the jagged metal part of the barge sunk at Hallsands, South Hams; how many days he gave the National Rivers Authority to complete this work from 23 July 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department is not responsible for removing the remains of the barge from the beach at Hallsands. We refused to allow the barge to remain in the sea as it was a danger to navigation. The National Rivers Authority declined to accept responsibility for the barge, which was owned by its contractor. The remains were sold to a salvage company and they were then hauled on to the beach to be cut up. We have no powers to order the clearance of the remains from the beach.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had, and with whom, as to reducing present restrictions on heavy goods vehicles travelling within residential areas within the Greater London area.

Mr. Norris: The Government are not proposing to reduce the present restrictions on heavy goods vehicles travelling within residential areas in London.

Franchise Expenses

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of *(a)* legal fees and *(b)* in-house expenses spent by the franchise director for each month since he took up office in relation to the preparation and negotiation of specifications, tenders and contracts relating to prospective franchises.

Mr. Watts: Total expenditure, net of recoverable VAT, by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising on *(a)* fees to legal advisers and *(b)* running costs is as follows:

	Amount
1993-94 (from 8 November)	
Legal fees:	£826,543·88p
Running costs:	£691,310·67p
1994-95 (to 19 July)	
Legal fees:	£514,375·73p
Running costs:	£557,744·10p

It is not practicable to apportion these totals between the matters mentioned in the question and other matters on which the office has incurred expenditure.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fundraising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) and my noble Friend Lord MacKay have made 18 visits abroad on departmental business to-date this year. Details of all visits are as follows:

John MacGregor OBE MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Sunday 6 February-Tuesday 8 February: Visit to Informal Council meeting in Athens, Greece.
Wednesday 9 March: Trilateral, German-French-British meeting in Dresden, Germany.
Monday 14 March-Wednesday 16 March: Second Pan-European Conference in Crete, Greece.
Sunday 17 April-Monday 18 April: EC Transport Council meeting in Luxembourg.
Friday 6 May: Official opening of the Channel Tunnel, Calais, France.
Thursday 26 May-Saturday 28 May: European Conference of Ministers of Transport in Annecy, France.
Thursday 9 June-Friday 10 June: European Civil Aviation Conference meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark.
Monday 13 June-Tuesday 14 June: EC Transport Council, Luxembourg.

The Right Hon. Roger Freeman MP, Minister for Public Transport

Friday 7 January: Visiting international stations in Lille, France.
Friday 6 May: Official opening of Channel Tunnel in Calais, France.

Robert Key MP, Minister for Roads and Traffic

Monday 6 June-Wednesday 8 June: Italy.

Steven Norris MP, Minister for Transport in London

Mr. Norris visited Cyprus in his capacity as a Constituency MP. The trip was not funded by public monies.
Friday 6 May: Official opening of the Channel Tunnel, Calais, France.

Lord MacKay of Ardbrecknish, Minister for Aviation and Shipping

Wednesday 26 January: Paris.

Sunday 13 February-Friday 18 February: Israel.
Wednesday 23 March: Brussels.
Tuesday 3 May: Le Havre.
Tuesday 7 June-Thursday 9 June: Athens.
Wednesday 22 June: Calais.

Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Bus and Coach Fares

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the percentage change in *(a)* bus and *(b)* coach fares, between (i) January 1987 and May 1994 and (ii) August 1992 and May 1994; and what contribution was made in each case by the increase in unit labour costs.

Mr. Watts: Information supplied to the Department by a panel of operators indicates that local bus fares in Great Britain increased by 63 per cent. between January 1987 and May 1994, and by 9 per cent. between August 1992 and May 1994. The contribution made by increases in unit labour costs is not known. No information is collected about changes in other—non-local—bus and coach fares.

Rail Strike

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate he has made of losses sustained by British Rail due to the signalmen's strike to date;

(2) what estimates he has made of the effects on the economy of the signalmen's strike to date.

Mr. Watts: British Rail estimates that it loses of the order of £9 million per day in revenue for each one day strike. The overall loss to British Rail will depend on the rebate to the access charge made by Railtrack.

It is impossible to estimate the damage to the overall economy, but continued strike action is clearly detrimental to passengers, the railway industry and the economy as a whole.

Property Acquisition

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the property acquired by his Department on possible routes for *(a)* the A36 Beckington-East of Bath road scheme and *(b)* the A46 Upper Swainswick-Tormanton road scheme; what was the total cost of acquisition of this property; and what is the current total estimated market value.

Mr. Norris: The question is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. The chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, is writing to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 20 July 1994:

I am writing in response to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Transport about properties acquired in connection with the proposed A36 Beckington to East of Bath and A46 Upper Swainswick to Tormarton improvement schemes. This is a matter for which the Highways Agency is responsible.

Three properties have been purchased as a result of the A36 scheme—The Villa and Dry Arch Cottage, Farleigh Wick, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, and Warleigh Lodge, Bathford Avon. For the A46 scheme, one property, Dunsdown Farm House. West Littleton, Avon, has been acquired. The total cost of acquiring these properties was just under £900,000.

The combined value of these properties was assessed by the Valuation Office Agency earlier this year as £785,000. The difference between the two figures arises mainly because purchase costs are assessed on an unblighted basis (ie ignoring the effect of the road proposals) whereas current value takes account of blight.

Motorways

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will mount a television advertising campaign to remind motorists that the middle and outside lanes of motorways are for overtaking purposes only.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to mount a publicity campaign to encourage drivers on motorways to use the nearest vacant inside lane.

Mr. Norris: In the past we have tried to persuade drivers to show better lane discipline—in particular, in collaboration with the police motorway safety campaign. Unfortunately, this has had no perceptible effect. I am therefore reluctant to divert publicity funds from the child road safety or drink/drive campaigns. We have announced proposals, backed by the insurance companies for post-test driver training which will include instruction in motorway driving techniques. The problem of poor lane discipline will also be addressed as part of the controlled motorway pilot scheme due to begin at Easter 1995 on the south-west sector of the M25.

Road Schemes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Yorkshire and Humberside region *(a)* the number of houses bought by his Department since 1988-89 for road schemes, *(b)* the total cost of purchases, (c) the number and cost of houses bought and then subsequently sold as they were not required for particular road schemes and *(d)* the level of income received from selling properties surplus to the requirements of road schemes.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* As this is an operational matter, the question will be dealt with by the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Derek Fatchett, dated 20 July 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questioin asking for information about the number and cost of property purchases and sales in Yorkshire and Humberside region since 1988.

The information you request is as follows:

(a) the Department has purchased 53 houses in the Yorkshire and Humberside since 1 April 1988. Additionally 15 flats have been purchased.

(b) the total cost of purchases is £8,074,299 for houses and £388,640 for flats.

(c) five houses have been purchased which were not ultimately needed for road schemes at a cost of £722,500. After a period of leasing they were sold for £599,000.

(d) total receipts from selling properties surplus to requirements is £1,007,000. This includes 11 properties purchased prior to 1 April and subsequently sold for £408,000.

Departmental Units

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade for each of the last five years the number of substantive staff employed by the *(a)* Marine Pollution Unit, *(b)* Marine Accident Investigation Branch and *(c)* Air Accident Investigation Branch.

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are given in the table.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Marine Pollution Control Unit:					
Grade 4	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 6	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 7	2	2	1	1	1
PSO	—	—	1	1	1
SEO	—	—	1	1	1
SSO	1	1	1	1	1
HEO	2	2	2	2	2
EO	2	2	2	2	2
AO	2	2	2	2	1
AA	1	1	—	—	—
Total	12	12	12	12	11
Marine Accident Investigation Branch:					
Grade 5	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 6	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 7	4	4	4	4	4
Surveyor[1]	4	6	6	6	6
HEO	1	1	1	1	1
EO	1	2	2	2	2
AO	1	2	2	2	2
AA	1	2	2	2	2
PS	1	1	1	1	1
Div Sec	—	1	1	1	1
Total	15	21	21	21	21
Air Accidents Investigation Branch:					
Grade 4	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 5	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 6	4	4	4	4	4
Grade 7	23	23	23	24	24
HEO	1	1	1	1	1
HPTO	—	—	—	—	1
EO	2	2	2	2	2
AO	3	3	3	3	4
AA	1	1	1	—	—
PS	2	2	2	2	2
TYP	2	2	2	2	2
SGB 1	1	1	1	2	2
P&G (E)[1]	—	—	—	—	1
EX WKR[2]	1	1	1	1	—
Total	42	42	42	43	45

[1] Progress and general supervisory grade
[2] Experimental worker

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade for each of the last five years the number of substantive staff employed by the *(a)* Marine Pollution Unit, *(b)* Marine Accident Investigations Branch and *(c)* Air Accident Investigation Branch.

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are as follows:

	1994-95 (£000)	*1993-94 (£000)*
The Coastguard Agency	24,530	23,884
Marine Accident Investigation Branch	839	846
Air Accidents Investigation Branch	2,852	2,882

Track and Signalling

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Railtrack will invest in *(a)* track and signalling maintenance and repair and *(b)* track and signalling renewal and new-build schemes in 1994-95.

Mr. Watts: Railtrack estimates that it will spend some £750 million on the maintenance and repair of track and signalling and associated structures in 1994-95. Separate figures for signalling renewal and new-build schemes are not available.

Rail Fares

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the cost of a full fare *(a)* first and *(b)* second or standard class return British Rail ticket from York to King's Cross in 1979 and in each year since then (i) in cash terms and (ii) at constant 1994 prices;

(2) what was the average cost per mile of full fare *(a)* first and *(b)* second or standard class travel on British Rail in 1979 and in each year since then (i) in cash terms and (ii) at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Watts: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested and place a copy in the Library.

Rail Strike (Costs)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the estimated cost to Railtrack to date of the signal staffs dispute.

Mr. Watts: Railtrack estimates that it has lost up to £6 million per day in access charges for each one-day strike, depending on the number of services which can run.

London Transport

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the total investment and planned investment by London Transport and the amount spent on *(a)* London Underground core business, *(b)* London Buses, *(c)* tendered bus division, *(d)* Docklands light railway, *(e)* new lines and extensions and *(f)* other, in each year between 1978 and 1996-97 at both cash prices and 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

Year	*LU Core*	*L Buses*	*TBD*	*DLR*	*New lines*	*Other*	*Total*
Cash prices							
1978	43	17	—	—	—	6	66
1979	60	32	—	—	—	8	100
1980	78	45	—	—	—	—	123
1981	91	56	—	—	—	—	147
1982	82	45	—	—	—	—	127
1983	110	58	—	—	—	—	168
1984-85	147	60	—	33	—	—	240
1985-86	143	40	—	33	—	18	234
1986-87	171	36	—	16	—	18	241
1987-88	206	20	—	61	—	7	294
1988-89	200	25	1	51	6	29	312
1989-90	294	28	1	93	13	14	443
1990-91	414	28	1	139	45	7	634
1991-92	298	38	1	162	71	12	582
1992-93	632	46	1	—	96	14	789
1993-94	484	21	—	—	301	15	821
1994-95	435	20	—	—	537	11	1,003
1995-96	512	25	—	—	472	13	1,022
1996-97	659	15	—	—	409	6	1,089
At 1993-94 prices:							
1978	123	49	—	—	—	17	183
1979	147	79	—	—	—	20	246
1980	162	93	—	—	—	—	255
1981	172	106	—	—	—	—	278
1982	145	79	—	—	—	—	224
1983	186	98	—	—	—	—	284
1984-85	188	69	—	53	—	—	310
1985-86	236	96	—	50	—	27	409
1986-87	253	53	—	24	—	27	357
1987-88	290	28	—	86	—	10	414
1988-89	263	36	1	67	8	38	413
1989-90	362	34	1	114	16	17	544
1990-91	472	32	1	158	51	8	722
1991-92	319	41	1	174	76	13	624
1992-93	652	47	1	—	99	14	813
1993-94	484	21	—	—	301	15	821
1994-95	418	19	—	—	516	10	963
1995-96	474	23	—	—	437	12	946
1996-97	596	13	—	—	370	5	984

Notes:

1. Figures for years up to 1993-94 are from London Transport Annual Reports. 1984-95 comprised 15 months.
2. 1991-92 was the last year in which LT were responsible for the Docklands Light Railway: this is now the responsibility of the London Docklands Development Corporation.
3. Figures for 1994-95 are LT's forecasts in their Budget for the year. In favourable circumstances, higher proceeds from the sale of LBL subsidiaries will allow a higher level of core business investment than shown here.
4. Figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97 are based on LT's plans following the Unified Budget, 1993. The amount of investment spend possible in these years and its allocation between headings within the core business are only indicative at this stage.

Railway Platforms (Tactile Edging)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make representations to British Rail to secure that tactile edging is placed on all railway platforms in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Watts: The Health and Safety Executive has consulted on revised "Railway Construction and Operational Requirements" to be published by the end of this year, which propose that platforms on new or rebuilt stations must have a tactile surface to indicate the edge to blind and partially sighted people, and that edges should be clearly defined with a strip of a lighter colour.

The Rail Regulator is proposing a similar recommendation in his code of practice to protect the interests of disabled passengers.

Hall Sands (Barge)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reimburse South Hams district council for the cost entailed in removing from the beach at Hall sands the barge formerly scuttled off Hall sands which was towed to the beach on the instructions of his Department.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The Department required the removal of this barge from a reef off the beach because it was a danger to navigation. The present owners, not the Department, decided to take the barge to the beach. Financial responsibility for the district council's costs is a matter between the council and the owners.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the powers and duties of Railtrack; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* These documents are already available for inspection at Companies House. I am arranging for a copy to be placed additionally in the Library.

Traffic Cones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the number of calls received by the cones enquiry line in each month since it was established;

(2) what measures his Department has taken to publicise the services offered by the cones enquiry line;

(3) how much the cones enquiry line has cost to administer and publicise in each financial year since its establishment; how much it is estimated that the cones enquiry line will cost to publicise and administer in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many traffic cones have been *(a)* placed on and *(b)* removed from the road network under the direct authority of his Department during the period that the cones enquiry line has been in operation;

(5) how much his Department has spent on (a) traffic cones and (b) road signs during the last year; and how many (i) traffic cones and (ii) road signs have been purchased during this period;

(6) what assessment his Department has made of the inquiries made to the cones enquiry line;

(7) how many cones have been removed from the roads network as a result of complaints lodged with the cones enquiry line;

(8) what constitutes a cone for the purpose of an inquiry to the cones enquiry line.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* As these are now operational matters for the Highways Agency, the chief executive has written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Laurie Haynes to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 20 July 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport for information on the Cones Hotline. As this is now an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I am replying to your questions.

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement on the number of calls received by the Cones Enquiry Line in each month since it was established.

The number of calls received on the Cones Hotline from the date of its inception to 8 July 1994 was 6,347. The figures have not been recorded in monthly form but 6,167 of the total have been received since mid-December 1993 when the road signs were introduced. This means that the average number of calls received per month is 880.

2. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what measures his Department has taken to publicise the services offered by the Cones Enquiry Line.

The Hotline number is displayed on signs which appear at the end of all major maintenance works. It appears in the Highways Agency's general information brochure and in its Road User's Charter. It is also registered with Directory Enquiries and with AA Roadwatch and RAC Roadata.

3. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much the Cones Enquiry Line has cost to administer and publicise in each financial year since its establishment; how much it is estimated that the Cones Enquiry Line will cost to publicise and administer in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Since the beginning of the current financial year the cost of the dedicated telephone line has been about £450 per month, including call charges. The Hotline previously operated on the Department's general switchboard. There have been no other separately identifiable costs, either in previous years or in the current year, because the Hotline has operated within running cost structures agreed before its inception. No staff are employed exclusively on Hotline activity. There is no advertising or publicity budget for the Hotline.

4. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many traffic cones have been *(a)* placed on and *(b)* removed from the road network under the direct authority of his Department during the period that the Cones Enquiry Line has been in operation.

The placement and removal of traffic cones is a matter for contractors or their traffic management sub-contractors. While they must follow traffic management and safety guidelines in laying out cones, they are not asked to provide figures on the number placed or removed.

5. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on *(a)* traffic cones and *(b)* road signs during the year; and how many (i) traffic cones and (ii) road signs have been purchased during this period.

Neither the Department nor the Agency buys traffic cones. They are purchased by and are the property of contractors or their traffic management sub-contractors. As with road signs their provision is included in the cost of contracts. There are no separately identifiable figures for the cost of cones and signs or the numbers provided of each.

6. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the enquiries made to the Cones Enquiry Line.

Enquiries are assessed as they are received. As many calls as possible are dealt with immediately; formal complaints or observations are referred to the regional offices for further investigation. The Hotline operator will make special enquiries whenever a number of calls are received in respect of the same location or roadwork site.

7. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many cones have been removed from the roads network as a result of complaints lodged with the Cones Enquiry Line.

Cones in place at three different sites have been removed as a direct result of enquiries made to the Cones Hotline. The appropriate contractors were instructed to remove the cones but no count of the precise number involved was necessary.

8. To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what constitutes a cone for the purpose of an enquiry to the Cones Enquiry Line.

The Cones Hotline will respond to any call related to delay arising from roadworks on the motorway and trunk road network.

I hope this information is helpful.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment the vehicle inspectorate has made of the impact of the changes contained in the Contracting Out and Deregulation Bill on its existing operation; and how the vehicle inspectorate intends responding to this legislative change in operational terms.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Discussions are taking place with the vehicle inspectorate about the implications for them of the proposed new legislation. Nothing in the Bill, would affect the inspectorate's role enforcing roadworthiness and traffic regulations. Nor would there be any change in their role of advising the traffic commissioners about operators.

Marine Conservation

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what input his Department will have in respect of the selection and designation of marine special protection areas and special areas of conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The nature conservation agencies through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, will be advising the Government on which areas may be considered for designation as special areas of conservation. The Department of Transport, together with other Departments, will be fully involved in discussing these proposals prior to public consultation. Work to identify special protection areas has been going on for some time. The Department of Transport will be consulted before any areas are designated.

Conservation Areas

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has under the EC habitats directive to ensure control and development in SACs and SPAs.

Mr. Norris: Special areas of conservation and special protection areas will be protected under the regulations to implement the habitats directive which are currently awaiting parliamentary approval. These regulations apply to aspects of development control which come within the responsibility of my Department.

TREASURY

Company Cars

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the practice of the Inland Revenue on the tax treatment of the offer of a cash alternative to a company car.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Where an employee has a company car available for private use he or she is usually taxed on the benefit of the car. The employer pays class 1A national insurance contributions on the benefit.

However, a judgment by the House of Lords in 1969 means that in some circumstances, where the benefit of a car is freely convertible into cash, the benefit is taxable under the general income tax rules rather than the special provisions for company cars. In these special circumstances the employee pays tax on the cash which he or she could get, and the employer does not pay national insurance contributions.

Some employers are making arrangements designed specifically to bring company cars within the terms of this judgment to avoid class 1A NICs and, in some cases, give a lower tax charge.

In order to remove further uncertainty and to prevent loss of revenues to the Exchequer and national insurance fund we intend to propose legislation in the next Finance Bill. The proposed legislation will ensure that where a car would otherwise be within the special income tax rules for company cars, and an alternative to the benefit of that car is offered, the mere fact that the alternative is offered will not make the benefit of the car chargeable to tax under the general income tax rules. The employee will then pay tax on what they actually get—car or cash. Employers will pay national insurance contributions as appropriate—class 1A on the benefit of a car or class 1 on cash.

We intend that this provision should apply from 6 April 1995.

Private Finance Panel

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the provision of grant in aid to the private finance panel.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I propose to make available to the private finance panel a grant-in-aid of £260,000 in 1994-95. This will represent a Government contribution towards the administrative costs of the panel. Parliamentary approval for this new service will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for Her Majesty's Treasury's vote, class XVII, vote 1. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure, estimated at up to £150,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. The grant-in-aid will be met from existing provision on the vote and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Redundant Factories (Social Housing)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the VAT rules under which tax is currently charged when redundant factories are converted into social housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that today Customs have published draft legislation which, subject to the approval of the House, will enable such conversions to be free of VAT. Customs have also announced that by concession the change will be operative from today. The result will be that the sale of any dwelling that is created by the conversion of a non-domestic building will be free of VAT. The relief will also apply to DIY builders who, for example, convert redundant barns into dwelling.

Additionally the proposed draft legislation amends the list of items installed in new dwellings on which input tax cannot be reclaimed. This relaxation will also operate from today by concession.

These two measures will result in approximately £20 million per annum being injected into the house building industry in terms of VAT revenue forgone. The proposed legislation will also simplify the application of a complex part of the VAT legislation, remove ambiguities and clarify the existing law.

A copy of the proposed legislation has been deposited in the Library.

VAT

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when a fresh Treasury order will be laid before the House to update the payments-on-account scheme for VAT.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The current annual cycle for the payments on account scheme runs from October to September. To avoid the timing difficulties caused by the move to a November Budget the scheme year will be realigned with the fiscal year to run from April to March.

The current scheme, which was intended to last for one year, will continue to the end of March 1995. The current VAT Payments on Account Order 1993 will therefore be replaced in time for the annual cycle beginning in April 1995.

This will mean that some businesses may be kept in the scheme for six months longer than expected, but the provisions for having payments reduced and for leaving the scheme where annual liability falls below £1·6 million will still apply in appropriate cases.

When the current order is replaced it will be amended to provide for automatic rolling forward of the scheme year in future without the need for a fresh statutory instrument.

Customs will conduct a review of the operation of the scheme. A consultation paper will be issued and all interested parties, including businesses in the scheme, will be offered the chance to participate in the consultation process.

The consultation paper will aim to address the concerns expressed by businesses about the scheme and to consider the scope for greater flexibility in its operation.

Valuation Office

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the three-year review of the Valuation Office agency will commence.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A review of the agency status of the Valuation Office is to commence on 1 August 1994. As a next steps agency the performance of the VO will be evaluated and its activities will be subjected to the normal prior options tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review" (Cm 2430).

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the VO and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 30 September 1994 to Mr. Brian Mace, Valuation Office Review, Inland Revenue, Room 223, South west wing, Bush house, Strand London WC2B 4RD.

Tax Advice

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information given in the July 1993 tax ready reckoner and tax reliefs booklet.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Treasury today is publishing a booklet containing estimates of the effects of various illustrative tax changes on tax receipts in 1994-95 and 1995-96 and preliminary estimates of the costs of the main tax reliefs in 1993-94 and 1994-95. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Privatised Companies (Debt)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the sale of part of the Government's holding of privatised companies' debt.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to report that the sale was successfully completed on 19 July. The Treasury accepted bids totalling £1·3 billion for the early redemption of the electricity and British Telecom bonds shown in the table.

Payment, with accrued interest, will be made to the Exchequer on 23 August 1994. The costs of the auction are expected to amount to some £0·7 million or less than 0·04 per cent. of proceeds. The proceeds will contribute towards the target of £5·5 billion privatisation proceeds for 1994-95.

In addition, Eastern Electricity bought back two bonds with face value of £118 million, with payment of £146·2 million—capital and interest—received on 29 April, and the National Grid Company exercised its pre-emption rights to repurchase two bonds with face value of £300 million, with payment of £343·4 million—capital and interest—received on 5 July. Including these receipts, the total proceeds—capital and interest—from the sale will be some £1·8 billion.

I am satisfied that the sale has secured good value for the taxpayer.

Outcome of the Treasury's debt sale

Issuer	*Maturity date*	*Coupon (per cent.)*	*Face value (£ million)*	*Bid (£ million)*	*Accrued interest (£ million)*	*Total proceeds (£ million)*
British Telecom	31 March 1998	8·625	141·4	143·9	6·0	150·0
British Telecom	31 March 1999	8·750	154·8	158·1	6·5	164·7
British Telecom	31 March 2005	9·250	243·6	253·3	9·9	263·2
London Electricity	25 September 1999	12·661	70·0	79·5	3·6	83·2
Manweb	25 September 1999	12·661	20·0	22·6	1·0	23·6
Manweb	25 September 2008	12·365	37·0	45·6	1·9	47·5
National Power	25 March 1998	12·035	350·0	379·5	17·3	396·8
Scottish Hydro-Electric	24 March 2005	11·856	116·0	134·8	5·7	140·5
Seeboard	25 September 2008	12·365	54·0	66·8	2·7	69·6
			1,186·7	1,284·2	54·8	1,339·0

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the losses incurred by the Bank of England since 1985 supporting *(a)* financial institutions and *(b)* manufacturing industry, the names of the borrowers and the date and path along which the loans were made and the date and form in which losses were disclosed in each case in the Bank's balance sheet; what reason of public policy led to the making of the loans and who is carrying the losses; and what assessment he has made of compliance with the Companies Act and rules of the regulatory agencies.

Mr. Nelson: The bank made provisions of £25 million in 1991-92 and £90 million in 1992-93, in respect of indemnities given to lenders to a number of small authorised banks. The total provision was reduced by £10 million in the year to February 1994. The background to these movements in provisions was set out in the bank's accounts for 1992-93 and 1993-94. As explained there, this support was designed to avert the possibility of widespread difficulties in the banking system and in the economy, and was successful in containing the potential problem.

In the year to February 1985, the bank made a provision of £34 million against possible losses on indemnities given in respect of the value of the loan book of Johnson Matthey Bankers, now Minories Finance Ltd. Subsequent recoveries by MFL have fully offset this provision.

The bank is not subject to the Companies Acts or to the disclosure rules of regulatory agencies, but its published accounts present fairly the state of affairs of the banking department in accordance with the Companies Act and applicable accounting standards in so far as they are appropriate to a central bank.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of publishing the minutes of his monthly meetings with the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor said in the Mansion House speech, and repeated at the Treasury and Civil Service Committee hearing, that publishing minutes was an important decision and one which made decision taking about interest rates in this country one of the most transparent in the world. A more informal debate about economic policy can take place because of the openness that surrounds discussions on monetary policy. The Chancellor said in the Mánsion House speech:

"I have given today's politicians and tomorrow's politicians no choice but to pursue the path of low inflation to which we are so clearly committed".

The latest minutes of the 8 June meeting were published on 20 July.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing his current estimate of the effect on the retail prices index of *(a)* a reduction of three percentage points on mortgage interest rates and *(b)* on the nominal exchange rate of 10 per cent. on a trade-weighted basis.

Mr. Nelson: A reduction in mortgage interest rates of three percentage points would contribute about −1·8 percentage points to the all items retail prices index.

The effect on the RPI of a change in the exchange rate depends on the circumstances in which it occurs. It is not possible to give a single estimate.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *758*, what assessment he has made of the factors which account for *(a)* the change in the level of exports to the rest of the EC of consumer goods including passenger motor cars in the three years to 1991 and the subsequent change to the first quarter of 1994 and *(b)* the corresponding increases of exports to the rest of the world: how the figures for the three months ended April differ from his forecasts since September 1992; and what were the corresponding changes in the volume of imports and in United Kingdom output of the consumer goods industries, and the figures for April.

Mr. Clarke: As discussed in the Treasury's summer economic forecast, export and import levels are affected by a number of factors including world trade, domestic demand and competitiveness. Forecasts are not made separately for trade with other EC countries and with non-EC countries, nor for consumer goods including passenger motor cars.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has available on the effect of differing degrees of devaluation on the share of imports in the United Kingdom market.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

City (Earnings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the increase in bonuses paid in the City in 1994 had on the increase in average earnings; and what proposals he has to restrict such bonuses.

Mr. Nelson: The large rise in bonuses in the financial sector in the first quarter of 1994 contributed to the rise in whole economy underlying average earnings growth, but it is not possible to say by exactly how much. Underlying average earnings growth has since fallen back, from 4 per cent. in March to 3¾ per cent. in April and May.

Bonus payments are a matter for individual firms and their employees.

VAT Tribunals

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has regarding diverging standards of proof required by VAT tribunals in England and Scotland in respect of the evidence required to establish error for purposes of imposing civil penalties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The VAT tribunals are independent bodies. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are not aware of any diverging standards of proof required by them.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage change for the United Kingdom and each EC country in imports and exports to the EC in terms of value in dollar terms together with *(a)* the average exchange rate against the dollar, *(b)* the increase in producer prices and *(c)* the increase in current or average value for September 1992 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nelson: The data on exchange rates and trade are given in the EUROSTAT publication "Eurostatistics, Data for Short-term Economic Analysis", published monthly. Producer prices are published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in "Main Economic Indicators", also published monthly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (1) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, what account he takes of overall living standards in deciding his objectives for exchange rate and competitiveness policies in relation to the total output and employment;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, through what mechanism a sustained growth in output and employment may be combined with the elimination of the balance of payments deficit other than through a fall in the exchange rate to a more competitive level;

(3) what assessment he has made of the contribution made by exchange rate changes to the change in export levels to other EC countries since February 1993;

(4) what evidence he has about the effect of excluding rates in the United Kingdom's levels of production, export, import, investment and employment;

(5) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *14*, concerning the exchange rate and competitiveness, what effect he expects output and employment of recessions in the EEC and other industrial countries to have on his policies; and what evidence he draws from other countries that his policies will have the effects intended;

(6) what evidence he has on the effect of falls in the nominal exchange rate which have not resulted in a fall in the real exchange rate have raised the rate of inflation: and what is the mechanism by which a fall in the nominal rate unaccompanied by a fall in the real rate results in a higher rate of inflation;

(7) what is the Government's policy on the extent to which interest rates and the rate of exchange can fall in order to reduce import penetration of the United Kingdom market for consumer goods;

(8) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, whether he regards as inflationary for the purposes of monetary and exchange rate policy the increase in rail fares as shown in the retail prices index since *(a)* January 1987 and *(b)* August 1992; and how much of the increase in each case was due to a (i) reduction in Government subsidies and (ii) an increase in unit labour costs;

(9) in which periods since 1970 falls in the nominal exchange rate have been greater than that required to compensate for an increase in the general level of prices; and what evidence he has that such falls in the real exchange rate have been inflationary.

(10) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, what assessment he has made of the effect of consumer prices and on the balance of visible trade of the fall in and real value of *(a)* the Italian lira and *(b)* the pound sterling against the ecu and other currencies since August 1992; if he will publish a table showing for Italy and the United Kingdom (i) the fall since August 1992 in the nominal exchange rate against the ecu and other currencies, (ii) the increase in the latest period of 12 months in producer and in consumer prices, (iii) the increase since August 1992 in import and export unit values for total trade and for manufactures and (iv) the balance of visible trade each year from 1990 and the current year to date at an annual rate;

(11) what comparison he has made between the effects of exchange rates on inflation in Italy and the United Kingdom since September 1992;

(12) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *14*, concerning the exchange rate and competitiveness, what effect he expects his policies to have on the share of manufacturing in gross domestic product; and what this share was in 1964, 1973, 1979, 1989 and at the latest available date;

(13) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, what assessment he has made of the effect on the United States and United Kingdom economies of the fall in real interest rates and in the nominal exchange rate for the dollar since August 1992; and if he will publish a table showing for the United Kingdom and the United States of America the reduction in real interest rates and the nominal exchange since August 1992 and the increase since 1992 in *(a)* real GDP, *(b)* manufacturing output, *(c)* unit wage costs in manufacturing, *(d)* producer prices, *(e)* employment and *(f)* the percentage rate of unemployment;

(14) what is his estimate of the reduction in unit labour costs in the import-competing and export industries required to reduce or increase the real value of sterling to its current nominal value: and what is his forecast of the likely effect of such a reduction on output and employment in those industries;

(15) if he will list the industrial countries whose trade-weighted real rate of exchange for manufactured goods has appreciated more since the second half of 1973 than that of the United Kingdom, as measured by *(a)* the terms of trade for manufactures, *(b)* relative producer prices and *(c)* relative export unit values;

(16) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *13-14*, whether he regards as inflationary for the purposes of monetary and exchange rate policy increases in the retail price of beer, wines and spirits and tobacco; what was the increase in retail prices in each case since *(a)* January 1987 and *(b)* August 1992; and how much of the increase was due to increases in (i) taxation, (ii) unit labour costs in production and (iii) unit labour costs in distribution.

(17) what assessment the Government made before joining the ERM of the effect on output and employment in manufacturing industry; and what was the actual outcome for the period considered;

(18) further to his written reply dated 4 July, c. *13-14*, concerning the exchange rate and competitiveness, in what respects his monetary and exchange rate policies have changed since October 1989;

(19) what evidence he has of the effect of changes in the exchange rate have been greater than that required to compensate for an increase in the general level of prices; and what evidence he has that falls in the real exchange rate have been inflationary.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many draft version CT200 Inland Revenue corporation tax returns have been printed; and at what cost to public funds.

Sir George Young: The Inland Revenue produced three versions of the corporation tax return CT 200 which consisted of the original sample; modified samples which were circulated for comment to the professional bodies; and the first issue during 1993-94. A total of 2,193,050 were produced at a cost of £542,696 excluding VAT.

Competitiveness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect his policy on competitiveness will have on the rate of increase of the real incomes before tax of the top and bottom deciles of incomes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Government policies are focused on improving incentives, encouraging enterprise and helping to create a well-educated, highly skilled labour force. That is the best way to ensure rising incomes for all.

Industrial Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *14*, which industries he expects to increase their share of gross domestic product within the framework provided by his policies.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The overseas visits made by Treasury Ministers between January and June 1994 are listed below:

	Attending
Chancellor of the Exchequer	
Indonesia and the Philippines—January 1994	Trade Mission
Switzerland—January 1994	World Economic Forum Meeting
Germany—February 1994	G7 Meeting
France—February 1994	Bilateral talks with French Government
Belgium—February 1994	ECOFIN
United States of America—March 1994	Jobs Conference
Belgium—March 1994	ECOFIN
Sweden—March 1994	Speech engagement
Greece—April 1994	Informal ECOFIN
Poland—April 1994	Bilateral talks with Polish Government
Russia—April 1994	EBRD Annual Meetings
United States of America—April 1994	IMF Spring Meetings
Belgium—May 1994	ECOFIN
Luxembourg—June 1994	ECOFIN
France—June 1994	OECD
Greece—June 1994	European Council
Germany—June 1994	Bilateral talks with German Government
Chief Secretary	
Brazil—March 1994	Trade Mission
Chile—March 1994	Representing United Kingdom Government at inauguration of new President
Spain—June 1994	Speaking engagements
Economic Secretary	
United States of America—May 1994	Trade Mission
Japan—May 1994	Trilateral Meetings

None of these visits involved fund-raising activities for the Conservative party.

European Structural Fund

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements have been made to ensure that structural fund resources are being made available now to national and local agencies and under *(a)* objective 2 and *(b)* objective 3.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: These arrangements are the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade and of the Secretary of State for Employment respectively.

Share Dividends

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of personal wealth is attributed to dividends in each of the last 15 years;

(2) what proportion of distributed dividends by companies has been paid to *(a)* individual shareholders and *(b)* institutions in each of the last 15 years;

(3) what was the ratio of distributed dividends to retained profits in companies of the last 15 years in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* Canada, *(e)* France, *(d)* Italy, *(f)* Hong Kong and *(g)* the United Kingdom.

(4) what are the figures for distributed dividends by private companies as a percentage of after-tax earnings in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report,* column *107,* what is the geographic breakdown of the payments; what is the approximate value of the assets against which these claims are being made; what amounts of these payments are going to residents of *(a)* Switzerland, *(b)* the Channel Islands and *(c)* offshore tax havens; what estimate he makes of the extent to which these payments are being made to corporations or trusts whose ultimate beneficiary or owner is resident in the United Kingdom; what is the total value of dividends or other payments in the United Kingdom, for each of the years given in his answer; and what proportions of overall tax credits are represented by the figures he gives in his answer, for each of the years given.

Sir Kenneth Clarke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the probable loss of capital gains tax arising from the foreign ownership of United Kingdom assets involved in transactions each year from 1981 to 1993-94; and if he will estimate the volume of United Kingdom assets in foreign ownership in which transactions occurred for each of these years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information on which to base reliable estimates is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the loss to the Exchequer in each year since 1981 from non-payment of capital gains tax on capital gains accruing to *(a)* United Kingdom residents and *(b)* foreign claimants on offshore tax havens.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures for uncollected capital gains tax for each year since 1981 are as follows:

Year	*Amount in thousands*
1981	2,734
1982	4,868
1983	6,496
1984	5,998
1985	7,562
1986	10,064
1987	8,822
1988	12,680
1989	10,864
1990	12,002
1991	29,721
1992	57,836

Information is not available to break down the figures between United Kingdom residents and foreign claimants.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those reports and studies made or commissioned by his Department into the loss of capital gains tax arising from foreign ownership of United Kingdom assets since 1981; and if he will list each of those occasions when the Inland Revenue has requested a study of the potential loss of capital gains tax arising from foreign ownership of United Kingdom assets.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have made no such studies.

Inflation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what distinction he draws in measuring inflation and assessing its importance between demand-pull, cost-push, leading-sector and asset inflation; how he assesses the damage done by each form; and if he will publish figures giving the relative impact of each form of inflation for each year between 1980 and 1990;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report,* columns *13-14,* if he regards as inflationary for the purposes of monetary and exchange rate policy the increase in the retail price of personal articles between August 1992 and May 1994 as shown in the retail prices index; what kind of articles were covered; and how much of the increase was due to increases in labour unit costs in production and distribution, respectively.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has from the monetary experience of individual countries of a link between increases in the money supply and the rate of inflation; what assessment he has made of the direction of any causal link; and if he will publish his evidence.

Mr. Nelson: It is the role of monetary policy to deliver the Government's inflation objective. Monetary policy influences inflation with a lag; the assessment of prospects for inflation in one or two years' time is based on a range of indicators and other data. Two of the main indicators are narrow and broad measures of the money supply. MO has proved a reliable indicator, primarily to signal current trends in the economy rather than to warn of future changes. M4 and its components and counterparts, such as lending by banks and building societies, contain important information on monetary conditions. However, experience indicates that the relationship between these aggregates and future inflation cannot always be relied upon.

Domestic Credit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations underlie his preference for the use of monetary targets instead of domestic credit as a measure of inflationary risk; and if he will publish a table showing the expansion of domestic credit each year since 1979 as a percentage of money gross domestic product along with the the actual increase in the measure of the money supply that he uses in measuring inflation and assessing its impact.

Mr. Nelson: Monetary policy decisions are based on an assessment of a range of monetary indicators and other data, in particular the growth of narrow and broad money and movements in the exchange rate and asset prices.

Domestic credit expansion statistics are no longer collected. Statistics covering MO, M4 and its counterparts are published monthly by the Bank of England in "Monetary Statistics"; a longer run of data is contained in the Bank of England "Statistical Abstract", part 2. Gross Domestic Product data are included in table 2 of "Economic Trends", June 1994.

VAT Headquarters

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are currently employed at the VAT headquarters building at the Queens dock, Liverpool.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Currently 752 staff are based in the building and 490 customs regional HQ and operational staff will move into the building in September 1994.

The change of emphasis from a pure HQ building to a mixed HQ and operational building has created a need to provide space for facilities for public callers, VAT traders and shipping agents from September 1994.

The space not required by customs has been re-allocated to the Charity Commission by Property Holdings, the managers of the Government's estate. The Charity Commission intends to move 236 staff into the building in November 1994.

Company Profits

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the figures for retained after-tax profits by companies in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Wealth Creation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the level of under-utilisation of the nation's wealth-creating capacity of the costs of this under-utilisation.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's latest assessment of the degree of spare capacity is set out in paragraphs 1.58 and 1.59 of the "Summer Economic Forecast 1994", published on 28 June. The summer forecast also predicted that real GDP growth of 2¾ per cent. this year would continue at the same rate next year, accompanied by low inflation.

Overseas Residents (Assets)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has for the value of United Kingdom assets owned by residents of *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey and *(d)* Switzerland.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Isle of Dogs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether 100 per cent. capital allowances are still allowable on properties bought unused or within two years of use in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone; and if he will estimate the revenue forgone in the 1993-94 financial year by the relaxations in enterprise allowances announced on 16 December 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Prepared Meals

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage change in the price of prepared meals between August 1992 and May 1994; and how much of the increase was due to the increases in common agricultural policy and other food prices and how much to an increase in unit labour costs.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Companies' Capital Needs

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the capital needs of companies have been met by *(a)* equity, *(b)* short-term bank finance, *(c)* term debt and *(d)* preference shares in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Rents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in rent as measured for the retail prices index since *(a)* January 1987 and *(b)* August 1992 distinguishing between local government, housing association, central Government and private rents.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Industrial Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's policy on increasing output in the principal import-competing and export industries; and what steps he is taking to achieve it.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Companies (Rights Issues)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the amount of capital raised by companies in the form of rights issues in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Nelson: The amount raised in rights issued by companies quoted on the official list of the London stock exchange and on the unlisted securities market is as follows:

Listed United Kingdom and Irish

Year	Number	Proceeds (£ million)
1979	97	974·267
1980	95	1,059·785
1981	108	1,971·974
1982	75	901·707
1983	134	2,007·043
1984	113	1,674·182
1985	135	4,054·753
1986	194	5,618·673
1987	215	8,452·950
1988	132	5,745·810
1989	117	4,604·129
1990	101	4,890·901
1991	158	10,133·388
1992	74	4,134·339
1993	171	11,377·609
1994	85	4,715·607
Unlisted Securities Market		
1980	1	1·456
1981	4	9·296
1982	5	12·132
1983	24	81·231
1984	19	66·394
1985	26	127·450
1986	32	109·646
1987	52	404·114
1988	37	277·757
1989	53	316·397
1990	42	348·833
1991	28	139·360
1992	21	94·078
1993	22	70·686
1994	17	102·162

Source: London Stock Exchange

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the share of manufacturing in gross domestic product in 1974, 1979, 1986, 1990 and at the latest available date; and what is his estimate of the level of the share needed to balance Britain's trade in manufactured goods;

(2) by how much output in the metal, metal product and mechanical engineering industries has changed since 1986; and what is his assessment of the extent to which this was affected by changes in the exchange rate.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Price Stability

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the economic benefits arising from making price stability the objective of monetary policy.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what annual rate of economic growth he regards as unsustainable in considering the case for higher interest rates and a higher exchange rate.

Mr. Nelson: There is no particular rate of economic growth which would trigger off change in interest rates. It is the role of monetary policy to deliver low inflation. Monetary policy decisions are based on an assessment of a range of monetary indicators and other data, in particular the growth of narrow and broad money and movements in the exchange rate and assets prices. Estimates of the extent of spare capacity in the economy are also taken into account. The minutes of the monthly meetings of the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss monetary policy are now published. The latest minutes of the 8 June meeting were published on 20 July.

Shareholders

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's policy on corporate government by shareholders; and if he will ensure that any proposals for the reform of stock exchange transactions do not prevent small private shareholders from holding share certificates and receiving automatically all documents relating to company business at the same time as they are received by corporate shareholders without incurring additional costs.

Mr. Nelson: The Government recognise the importance of shareholders being able to participate appropriately in the government of the companies in which they hold shares. The stock exchange introduced rolling settlement on Monday, 18 July. Initially, settlement will be 10 days after the transaction, with a possible reduction to five days in 1995. Some market makers have stated that they will offer settlement on non-standard terms to shareholders who keep their share certificates. This will enable those shareholders to keep their own names on the company register and hence to receive all documents relating to company business direct from the company at no cost and at the same time as other shareholders.

Endangered Species

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many seizures of parts of endangered animals were made in the United Kingdom during 1992 and 1993; and how many of these seizures were in connection with their use as components of traditional Chinese or far eastern medicine.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There were 345 seizures of such goods in 1992 and 178 in 1993 by HM Customs and Excise. Two of the 1992 seizures and 12 of the 1993 seizures were of far eastern goods claimed to have medicinal properties.

Coffee

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage change in the retail price of coffee since August 1992; and what further change may be expected as a result of the increase in the world price of coffee beans this year to date.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Earnings

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 12 July if he will now give the information on the ratio of the direct cost of employment to take-home pay for each year since 1964 of a person on two-thirds or twice average earnings requested without pensions contributions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that it has not been possible to provide a substantive answer before the summer recess. I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Intimidation, Newtownabbey

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of intimidation have been reported in Newtownabbey in each of the last five years; and how many cases have resulted in forced change of address.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Housing

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on policy appraisal and fair treatment with regard to the application of relevant principles and procedures in the context of the housing policy review.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Government are committed to securing equality of opportunity and equity of treatment for all people in Northern Ireland through the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the promotion of fair treatment.

The policy appraisal and fair treatment principles will be taken into account throughout the period of the housing policy review. Comments have been invited from a wide range of housing interests including constitutional political parties, public bodies, the voluntary sector and disabled groups.

Existing policies and any new policies arising from the housing policy review will be subject to the PAFT principles and procedures.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proportionate religious breakdown of heads of household in Northern Ireland who are *(a)* owner occupiers, *(b)* Housing Executive tenants and *(c)* housing association tenants; and what is the breakdown for the population as a whole.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Table 1
Proportionate religion breakdown of heads of household in Northern Ireland

	Households owning their own accommodation	*[1]Households renting their accommodation from a public authority*	*Households renting their accommodation from a housing assocation or charitable trust*
Total number	330,198	155,817	8,405
Population proportion	1	1	1
Roman Catholic number	101,355	59,686	2,371
Proportion	0·3070	0·3831	0·2821
Presbytarian number	86,279	28,962	1,859
Proportion	0·2613	0·1859	0·2212
Church of Ireland number	61,019	34,321	1,961
Proportion	0·1848	0·2203	0·2333
Methodist number	14,751	5,625	486
Proportion	0·0447	0·0361	0·0578
Other denominations number	28,090	10,379	819
Proportion	0·0851	0·0666	0·0974
None number	15,766	5,557	385
Proportion	0·0477	0·0357	0·0458
Not stated number	22,938	11,287	524
Proportion	0·0695	0·0724	0·0623

[1] For example, Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Table 2
Proportionate religion breakdown of Northern Ireland usually resident population

Religion	*Number*	*Proportion*
Total population	1,577,836	1·0000
Roman Catholic	605,639	0·3838
Presbyterian	336,891	0·2135
Church of Ireland	279,280	0·1770
Methodist	59,517	0·0377
Other denomination	122,448	0·0776
None	59,234	0·0375
Not stated	114,827	0·0728

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportions of *(a)* Housing Executive and *(b)* housing association tenants are in receipt of (i) housing benefit and (ii) maximum housing benefit.

Mr. Ancram: The proportion of Housing Executive tenants receiving housing benefit is 73 per cent. or 110,331; 55 per cent. or 82,660 receive maximum housing benefit.

Information in respect of housing association tenants could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Agricultural Workers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate of the total number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Agricultural wages board in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The latest estimate is approximately 9,265 persons.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate of the number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Agricultural Wages Board in Northern Ireland, for each county of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The latest estimate per county is as follows:

	Numbers
Antrim	1,975
Armagh	1,206
Down	2,182
Fermanagh	644
Londonderry	1,453
Tyrone	1,805

Department of the Environment

Sir James Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about possible executive ageny status for the works service of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Government have decided that the works service of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland should be considered as a candidate for executive agency status, under the "next steps" initiative. A prior options study will be undertaken to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. I would welcome comment from interested parties. Comments should be sent by 31 August 1994 to:

The Secretary
Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland
Works service
Churchill house
Victoria square
Belfast
BT1 4QW

Valuation and Lands Agency

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for the Valuation and Lands Agency in 1994-95.

Sir John Wheeler: For 1994-95 the following key performance targets have been set for the agency:

1. To complete 44,600 rating cases, equivalent to 27,000 work units.
2. To complete 21,750 client service cases, equivalent to 23,500 work units.
3. To achieve a productivity for case working valuers of 304 work units.
   To achieve a productivity for all staff of 160 work units.
4. To achieve at least a 3.0 per cent. efficiency saving on the 1993-94 out-turn.
   To reduce the unit cost of casework by 3 per cent. in real terms.
5. To issue 93 per cent. of certificates for rating cases subject to backdating within 12 months of the events giving rise to revisions of the valuation list.
   To achieve a standard in rating valuations such that 86 per cent. of those determined on appeal are within plus or minus 10 per cent. of the initial assessment.
   To complete 70 per cent. of rating appeals within six months of receipt.
   To complete 93 per cent. of a representative sample of client services casework within agreed time limits.

Full details are set out in the agency's corporate and business plans, copies of which are being placed in the Library of the House.

Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many beds designated for adolescent psychiatry there were in Northern Ireland in each year since 1979 and at the last date.

Mr. Ancram *[pursuant to his reply, 17 June 1994, column 678]:* In Northern Ireland the average number of beds in the child and adolescent psychiatry specialty has been 20 in each year since 1981 to December 1993, with the exception of 1982 when the average was 21. Information on the child and adolescent psychiatry specialty was not collected prior to 1981.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the most common forms of mental illness for children and teenagers; and what was their incidence in Northern Ireland in the period 1979 to 1993.

Mr. Ancram *[pursuant to his reply, 17 June 1994, columns 678-79]:* The number of cases of adjustment reaction in 1992-93 was 60 and not 46 as originally stated.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest figures and list for each of the last four years by region the number of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* midwives, *(d)* health visitors, *(e)* administration and clerical staff and *(f)* managers.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the tables for the four health and social services boards, the National Board for Nursing and Midwifery and the Central Services Agency.

Year	Medical staff September	Nursing staff March	Midwifery staff March	Health visiting staff March	Combined administrative and clerical and managerial staff March
Eastern health and social services board					
1990	984	9,388	52	125	3,377
1991	955	9,123	55	137	3,474
1992	1,008	8,739	56	192	3,837
1993	n/a	8,257	59	211	3,981
1994	n/a	7,361	57	181	3,784
Northern health and social services board					
1990	215	2,719	44	87	1,242
1991	226	2,675	42	86	1,332
1992	236	2,647	34	90	1,435
1993	n/a	2,574	32	89	1,501
1994	n/a	2,497	38	87	1,570
Western health and social services board					
1990	190	2,831	54	58	891
1991	196	2,795	47	74	970
1992	199	2,755	46	71	980
1993	n/a	2,711	43	66	1,116
1994	n/a	2,426	44	64	1,072
Southern health and social services board					
1990	190	2,665	24	78	928
1991	193	2,627	12	54	975
1992	204	2,534	15	81	1,019
1993	n/a	2,580	24	82	1,113
1994	n/a	2,391	19	86	1,063
National board for nursing and midwifery					
1990	—	297	—	—	95
1991	—	294	—	—	101
1992	—	302	—	—	95
1993	—	308	—	—	112
1994	—	284	—	—	91
Central services agency					
1990	—	—	—	—	386
1991	—	—	—	—	413
1992	—	—	—	—	427
1993	—	—	—	—	413
1994	—	—	—	—	477

Notes:
1. Total whole time equivalent staffing employed in the Northern Ireland health and personal social services.
2. Nursing staffing figures exclude nursing staff working in the midwifery and health visiting specialties.
3. Project 2000 student nurses excluded from nurse staffing levels as they are not employees.
4. Midwifery and health visiting staffing levels include all grades of nursing staff working in these specialties.
5. Figures for 1993 and 1994 have not yet been collated.
6. Figures include staff involved in patient-related duties eg. ward clerks.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

The Attorney-General: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

The Departments for which I am responsible are the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office. The services provided by the first two are largely internal to Government. The functions of the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office relate purely to the criminal justice system.

As regards purchasing, all the Departments have regard to the desirability of encouraging small businesses in line with the policy of the Government as a whole. However, no specific programmes of support and assistance operate in the Departments for which I am responsible.

Prosecutions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in each of the last three years the Crown Prosecution Service has determined against a prosecution on reasons relating to the publicity of the case being sufficient punishment *(a)* partially and *(b)* wholly in (i) Wales and (ii) England.

The Solicitor-General: Each case is considered on its individual merits in accordance with the criteria laid down in the code for Crown prosecutors. The most common public interest factors affecting the decision whether to prosecute are set out in the code. Adverse publicity is not mentioned.

In some limited circumstances, the consequences for the offender of the misconduct may be a relevant but not conclusive public interest factor in the decision. However, no statistics are maintained by the CPS as to the numbers of such cases.

Ferranti/ISC

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if he will make a statement on the factors which led to no charges being brought by the United Kingdom authorities against any individual following the fraud at Ferranti International Signal and Control. in 1989;

(2) what action he took following the disclosure to his Department of the relationship between International Signal and Control and *(a)* South Africa, *(b)* Chile and *(c)* Iraq;

(3) what action he took following the disclosure by the Ferranti chairman that his company had been defrauded in 1989; what action he took to secure the records of ISC in west London after the disclosure of fraud in 1989; and what action he has taken following the conclusion by the United States courts that the original flotation of ISC in London in 1982 was fraudulent.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given to him yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. It is my policy not to divulge operational details relating to criminal investigations carried out by the Serious Fraud Office.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Broadcasting

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to introduce a code of conduct for the members of the Broadcasting Council for Wales specifying the proper mode for making declarations of interest on areas where conflicts of interest arise.

Mr. Sproat: None. This is a matter for the BBC.

Channel 5

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to seek international clearance for the additional frequencies for Channel 5; which areas not covered by the cleared frequency plan are expected to be covered by these additional frequencies and using which channels; and when these frequencies have received clearance, what coverage Channel 5 should then have.

Mr. Sproat: International clearance for the additional frequencies for an analogue Channel 5 service will be sought by the Radiocommunications Agency on the basis of detailed proposals prepared by the Independent Television Commission. The Government believe that it should be possible to assign frequencies for Channel 5 to reach more than 60 per cent. of the population. The Government intend that a successful Channel 5 applicant would also have the option to simulcast the service digitally to around 80 per cent. or perhaps more than 90 per cent. of the population.

Planning Guidance

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the planning policy guidance note on historic buildings and conservation areas will be published.

Mr. Sproat: I expect PPG15, now entitled "Planning and the Historic Environment", to be published and issued during August.

A list of the responses received to last year's consultation paper will be placed in the Library in due course.

The detailed legal instruments relating to listed building and conservation area matters will not form part of the PPG, but will be issued later as soon as the necessary consultations have been completed.

British Paralympic Association

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what public funding is given to the British Paralympic Association; what assessment he has made of whether disabled athletes are adequately consulted by its administrators and have opportunities, on the basis of ability, to participate in the administration of the Association; what consultation his Department has had with organisations of disabled people on the statement from the association on the absence of people with disabilities who are able to serve it in an administrative post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: A condition of the Sports Council's 1994-95 grant of £100,000 to the British Paralympic Association is that the BPA should not discriminate against anyone on the basis of their disability. The detailed implementation of this requirement is a matter for the BPA. I am aware that the association has an athletes' committee comprising disabled athletes which has voting status on the BPA's National Paralympic Committee. In addition, a number of other members of this committee and two of the BPA's directors are disabled.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated

in fundraising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Canada Geese

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many Canada geese have been culled in St. James's park in the last two years; how they were culled; by whom and at what time of the day; and what happened to the carcases.

Mr. Sproat: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Kensington Palace

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 14 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *705*, on accommodation for Mr. Peat at Kensington palace, who made the decision to allocate specific accommodation to Mr. Peat and to his deputy; if fees were incurred for each category of expenditure; under which percentage the reduction of salary is assessed in each case and on what rate these levels were set; what consideratoin led to the allocation of identical sums for different sized apartments; which other officials of the royal household have accommodation in this section of Kensington palace; and if the salaries of Mr. Peat and his deputy are charged against grant-in-aid.

Mr. Sproat: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. I shall therefore write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will make a statement on the achievements of the Commission in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which the Commission monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission has a policy of competitive tendering which is broadly in line with that of the civil service. Any company, irrespective of size, capable of meeting the stated requirements is free to put in a tender for work or for the provision of goods and services required by the House.

The House does not keep records of the size of supplier companies.

Clerk's Department

Mr. Steen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the current salary and grade of officers of the House serving the five domestic Committees set up by Standing Order No. 125; how many Clerks there are in the Department of the Clerk of the House; and what is the total annual salary bill.

Mr. Beith: Three officers serve the five domestic Committees, one grade 4 and two grade 7. Their salaries total £131,900 p.a. There are 61 Clerks in the Department of the Clerk of the House. The total annual salary bill for the Clerk's Department, including all support staff but excluding the Vote Office, was £5·1 million for last year.

Exhibitions

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Open university to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 24 October to Friday 28 October.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 19 December to Friday 23 December.

ENVIRONMENT

Sabrina Bridge, Worcester

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the procedures used by Worcester city council in *(a)* deciding to construct and *(b)* offering the tender for the new cycle and footbridge over the River Severn, now known as the Sabrina bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I will write to the hon. Member.

Tree Preservation

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his plans for a review of law regarding tree preservation orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department and the Welsh Office issued a consultation paper "Review of Tree Preservation Policies and Legislation", in December 1990, setting out the Government's proposals for reforming the law relating to tree preservation orders in England and Wales. Some 312 responses were received from a broad range of

interests including local authorities, environment and amenity groups, farmers and landowners, arboriculturists, utility companies, and members of the public. Copies have been placed in my Department's library.

The continued use of the tree preservation order as a means of protecting trees, groups of trees and woodlands in the interests of amenity was supported by most respondents. The Government agree that the system has proved its worth over the years, and have decided that local authorities' present powers to make tree preservation orders in respect of trees and woodlands would be retained. We have considered calls from some respondents who consider that tree preservation orders should provide not only for the protection of trees but for their management. The Government recognise the importance of encouraging the proper management of trees, particularly in woodlands but does not consider that the present system precludes local authorities from promoting the continued management of protected trees in their areas. We therefore do not think that it is necessary to impose new requirements either on tree owners or local authorities.

The Government's conclusions, which I am laying before the House today, set out three broad aims.

Our first aim is to streamline the administration of the system and bring flexibility to the way it is operated. The present form of tree preservation order, which is long and complex, would be replaced by a shorter, simpler document. The present exemption to deal with protected trees which cause a nuisance would be clarified; and codes of practice would be introduced to promote the sensitive management of trees by statutory undertakers and utility companies in consultation with local authorities. Local authorities would be given discretion in determining the location of trees which are planted to replace protected trees; and the present requirement to replace protected trees which have been removed in woodlands would be simplified.

Our second aim is to ensure that the system continues to recognise the interests of the tree owner. Rights to compensation for loss or damage incurred as a result of local authorities' decisions on applications to carry out works to protected trees would be clarified. A local authority's ability to make tree preservation orders over areas of trees other than in woodlands would be limited, and provision would be made for existing area orders to lapse after a suitable transitional period. Furthermore, in the light of responses to the consultation paper, we have decided against bringing forward proposals to repeal the tree owner's right to object to the making of a tree preservation order, and against giving local authorities new powers to require the tree owner to carry out, and pay for, remedial works to protected trees.

The Government's third aim is to ensure that local authorities have adequate powers to bring effective action against abusers of the system. The present offence of "wilful" destruction or damage of protected trees would be replaced by an offence based on recklessness. We would clarify that a person who "causes or permits" the unauthorised destruction or damage of protected trees is also guilty of the offence. The present exemption which allows the cutting down of dying trees which are the subject of tree preservation orders would be repealed, and although the exemption to carry out work on protected trees which have become dangerous would be retained, this would be subject to a new requirement to show that the work was limited to the minimum measures necessary. A new offence for failing to comply with a tree replacement notice would also be created. However, new powers would not be introduced enabling local authorities to regulate the planting and maintenance of replacement trees.

The Government believe that these measures would improve the tree preservation order system in a way that would meet the public's desire for effective measures to protect key trees and woodlands in the interests of amenity, without placing unnecessary restrictions on the rights of the citizen.

A paper setting out each of the Government's conclusions in more detail, and a list of all those who responded to the consultation paper, have been placed in the Library of the House. The current pressures on the parliamentary timetable mean that there is no prospect in the immediate future of introducing the necessary legislation to enact these changes. In the interim therefore the current system will be retained.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Curry: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

The Government brought together in April the regional offices of four Departments—Environment, Trade and Industry, Transport and Employment—to form the Government offices for the regions. These will strengthen the co-ordination of programmes and policies locally and ensure that businesses have one port of call.

The Government's regeneration initiatives are being simplified by the introduction of the single regeneration budget which will benefit small firms by encouraging sustainable economic growth by improving the competitiveness of the local economy. We will continue under the SRB to monitor existing programmes, including measures relevant to businesses, and to publish results.

English Partnerships has been established and is tackling the problems of urban regeneration in co-operation with the private sector and other agencies.

The Rural Development Commission, sponsored by my Department, continues to provide advice and other assistance to small businesses in rural areas. On 14 February the Government announced a new competition, rural challenge, to be adminstered by the RDC. This will award six prizes of £1 million to innovative rural development projects. These will benefit small businesses by giving a boost to social and economic development in our smaller towns and villages.

The Department introduced the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1993 to honour the Chancellor of the Exchequer's March 1993 Budget pledge to freeze rate rises for

businesses in real terms under the non-domestic rating transitional arrangements for the second year running. Following the November 1993 Budget, the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994 then halved transitional rate rises for 1994-95, cutting them from 15 per cent. to 7·5 per cent. in real terms for small businesses. Small businesses with mixed domestic and business *premises had their increases* frozen for a third year.

In partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, we have set up a review into the organisation of enforcement functions of local authorities with the aim of minimising the costs to business as well as reducing inconsistencies in enforcement. We expect to publish the results later this year.

My Department's Energy Efficiency Office continues to provide grants under the energy management assistance scheme to help smaller businesses reduce their energy costs. Over the past 12 months almost 3,500 grants, averaging about £450 each, have been paid to small manufacturing and commercial enterprises.

My Department has continued to work with DTI to support a programme designed to raise awareness of environmental issues among small firms and give them practical help and guidance on improving their environmental performance. This is in response to a recommendation from our advisory committee on business and the environment. Over the past 12 months we have made progress on both aspects of this programme—support for local green business clubs and for sectoral projects. Four further green business clubs have been launched with our support—in Leeds, Newcastle, Southampton and the London borough of Sutton. My Department has commissioned external research to evaluate how effective the clubs are in improving the environmental performance of small businesses in their locality. We have also started to support an initiative in the leather industry, working in partnership with the British Leather Confederation, to raise awareness and promulgate best practice among the many small businesses in that sector. Over the next year we will continue to fund this programme and to monitor the impact that it has on environmental awareness, attitudes and behaviour among small firms.

In the competitiveness White Paper my Department committed itself to working with the DTI to review the procedures for alerting small businesses to new environmental regulations and for explaining them. We will take this commitment forward over the next 12 months.

We have laid regulations to transfer some processes from the much more wide-ranging integrated pollution control system to local authority air pollution control and to exempt certain processes from control altogether.

Regulations were amended in October 1993 to allow a single IPC authorisation to cover an entire chemical process, from receipt of raw materials, via production of intermediates, to dispatch of finished products. The amended regulations also allow operators of what would normally be seen as more than one process to function with a single authorisation if they are producing less than 250 tons of product per year.

In July 1993 my Department issued a consultation paper on proposals to repeal controls exercised by local authorities to approve the design and fitting of arrestment plant on small furnaces. We intend to implement the repeal by means of the general deregulation power in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, if enacted.

In March this year, we announced that in view of environmental improvements, we had re-examined proposals for regulations on the sale and sulphur content of domestic fuels, *and did not intend to introduce further* controls.

We have introduced a new definition of waste and issued guidance on its interpretation which is deregulatory in effect. We have helped small businesses by substantially increasing from 1 May 1994 the number of exemptions from waste management licensing.

My Department, in conjunction with DTI, has worked with industry to set up schemes for managing supplies of halons and CFC refrigerants following phase-out. Small businesses will therefore continue to have access to used or recycled substances to keep equipment running, thereby reducing the short-term costs of phase-out.

During the last year we have consulted widely on a number of proposals related to water pollution controls, water abstraction and reservoirs, with a view to deregulating where possible. In consulting we were careful to ensure that the interests of small businesses were adequately represented.

In our role as sponsors of the construction industry, we have encouraged the smaller trade associations to affiliate to larger unbrella bodies so as to improve communication between the industry and the Department. Information flow has improved through a new regular series of meetings and a relaunch of our magazine. The Latham review of procurement gave particular attention to the needs of small contractors and subcontractors to be paid promptly. We aim to minimise the burden on small firms on form filling, provide a statistical feedback as an aid to planning and encourage user-friendly research results. In addition, export support has been significantly increased over the past year to provide assistance to companies of all sizes.

In December 1993, my Department issued a consultation paper "Streamlining Planning" which proposed relaxing several planning controls which would benefit small firms. We will be announcing the outcome of that consultation shortly. The Planning Inspectorate agency has further improved its performance in dealing with appeals more promptly, to the advantage of all businesses.

My Department monitors all its programmes and publishes details of a wide range of outputs and targets in its annual report.

Environment Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made in the establishment of an Environment Agency since 15 July 1992; and how its proposed structure now differs from that set out in press release 499/92.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). The structure we propose for the Environment Agency for England and Wales is that set out in the press notice issued in July 1992: the agency will be responsible for the current functions of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and the waste regulation authorities. It will bring these responsibilities together in a

single national body, providing the opportunity for more coherent and integrated environmental protection and for a more streamlined service to industry and the public.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he has held since 15 July 1992 with *(a)* individual local authorities and *(b)* representative associations of local authorities to ensure that close liaison is achieved and maintained between his Department and local authorities over the planning arrangements for the Environment Agency.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has held no meetings with individual local authorities or with local authority associations exclusively on the subject of the Environment Agency. Officials in my Department have held regular meetings since October 1992 with representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the proposed arrangements for the agency.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total received in national non-domestic rates in each year since its inception from each local authority; and what corresponding payment has been paid to each local authority on the same basis.

Mr. Curry: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what statutes or regulations bailiffs acting on behalf of local authorities seeking to enforce payment of uniform business rates are permitted to seize from *(a)* limited and *(b)* unlimited liability companies goods essential to the conduct of their lawful business.

Mr. Curry: The regulations which govern the levying of distress to cover non-payment of liability for non-domestic rates are the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989, S.I. 1989 No. 1058, as amended by the Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Amendment and Miscellaneous Provision) Regulations 1993, S.I. 1993, No. 774. These regulations are made under paragraphs 1 to 4 of schedule 9 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. There were equivalent provisions under the General Rate Act 1967.

Coal Industry Act 1994

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications of the environmental liabilities arising out of the Coal Industry Act 1994 on the nature conservation interest of special areas of conservation and special protection areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Section 53 of the Act imposes an environmental duty on operators to have due regard to a site's natural beauty, flora and fauna, geological and physiographical interest. In respect of planning consents for coal extraction, under the Coal Industry Act 1994, the new privately owned companies will have to comply with the requirements of European law as transposed by the Conservation (Natural Conservation &c) Regulations 1994 currently before Parliament.

Water Industry (EC Directives)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an estimate of the extent to which EC directives on water quality have resulted in the increased cost of water to domestic consumers; what action he is taking to reduce obligations placed on water companies to raise standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated costs of EC directives together with other obligations have been included in the current review of price limits by the Director General of Water Services. He will be announcing revised price limits on 28 July. The Government have sought to clarify the obligations of the water companies so that in general there is no need to go further than the Community requirements.

Air Quality

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which population centres of over 100,000 currently have no national air pollution monitoring station.

Mr. Atkins: The following urban areas with a population of over 100,000, as defined in "Key Statistics for Urban Areas: Great Britain: Census 1981" produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Registrar General, Scotland, have no national air pollution monitoring stations:

High Wycombe
Ipswich
Blackburn/Darwen
Reading
Aldershot
Bournemouth
Southend

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total planned number of enhanced urban network monitoring stations for the United Kingdom; and if he will give details of future proposed sites.

Mr. Atkins: The Government intend to expand the enhanced urban monitoring network from 12 to 24 sites by 1997. The Department has also issued a discussion paper on integrating local authority monitoring sites into the national network. Advice on siting will be obtained from the quality of urban air review group.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of air pollution in Stoke-on-Trent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: For the years 1992-93 and 1993-94 the European Community directive (80/779/EEC) limit values for SO_2 and smoke was not exceeded in Stoke-on-Trent. The directive guide values for these pollutants was exceeded in both years. The data is as follows:

	Time and Limit
Limit values	
SO_2	
Annual median	both years (50 μgm^{-3}) below limit of 80 μgm^{-3}
Annual 98 percentile	both years (107 μgm^{-3} and 108 μgm^{-3}) below limit value of 250 μgm^{-3}
Smoke	

	Time and Limit
Annual median	both years (14 μgm^{-3}) below limit of 68 μgm^{-3}
Annual 98 percentile	both years (58 μgm^{-3} and 46 μgm^{-3}) below limit of 213 μgm^{-3}
Guide values	
SO_2	
Annual mean	both years (53 and 52 μgm^{-3}) *above* guide of 40 μgm^{-3}
Max day	max day both years (125 and 135 μgm^{-3}) *above* guide value of 100 μgm^{-3}
Smoke	
Annual mean	both years (17 and 16 μgm^{-3}) below guide of 34 μgm^{-3}
Max day	max day both years (98 and 84 μgm^{-3} *above* guide value of 85 μgm^{-3}

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he now proposes in response to the European framework directive on ambient air quality management.

Mr. Atkins: The European Commission has recently adopted a proposal for a framework directive on ambient air quality assessment and management. My Department will follow the normal procedures for informing Parliament of proposed European legislation as soon as it is notified of the contents of the proposal. The proposal will come for discussion in the European Council in due course, and the United Kingdom will participate fully in those discussions.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the national air pollution monitoring network to include suburban areas.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is advised on siting of air pollution monitors in urban areas by the quality of urban air review group and for ozone by the photochemical oxidants review group. The latter is currently considering the siting of monitors. The Department has issued a discussion paper on integrating local authority monitoring sites into the national network and has already incorporated a suburban site in east London into the network.

Asbestos

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria followed by his Department in approving industrial housing developments on land which is known to be contaminated by asbestos deposits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: All planning applications are considered on their merits. Where land contamination is involved, it can be a material planning consideration. In such cases, before granting planning permission, local planning authorities should be satisfied that the development proposals include work to deal with any unacceptable risks to health or the environment and make the site suitable for its intended use.

Planning advice for development on contaminated land is contained in planning policy guidance note 23 "Planning and Pollution Control", published earlier this month.

Advice on the investigation, assessment and treatment of asbestos-contaminated sites is provided by the inter-departmental committee on the redevelopment of contaminated land guidance note 64/85, 2nd edition October 1990, "Asbestos on Contaminated Land".

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the sites of special scientific interest which have been identified for a road building or road widening programme and *(b)* those sites in respect of which he has (i) issued a Nature Conservation Order under section 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or (ii) made an order for the compulsory purchase of the land in the last two years.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive information about road building or widening programmes which might affect SSSIs is not held centrally and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. The following nature conservation orders have been made in the last two years:

Site	*Date made*
Sawston Hall Meadows (Cambridgeshire) 1992	12 November 1992
Kernick and Ottery Meadows (Cornwall) 1993	27 April 1993
Lindisfarne (Northumberland) 1993	15 October 1993
Lingwood Meadows (Suffolk) 1994	8 February 1994

No compulsory purchase orders under part II of the 1981 Act have been made in the last two years.

National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend powers under section 20 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Mr. Atkins: Regulation 28 of the Conservation of Natural Habitats Regulations 1994, recently laid before the House, enables the appropriate nature conservation body to make byelaws for the protection of important European sites under section 20 of the 1949 Act. My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend these powers.

Landfill Disposal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from the construction industry in regard to applicability of the Kelly table on contaminated soil classification to licensed landfill disposal.

Mr. Atkins: None. The Department is currently preparing updated guidance on acceptability of wastes, including contaminated soils, for licensed landfill disposal and will be consulting industry on the guidance.

Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information has been received by Her Majesty's Government from the United States Department of Energy that constitutes an environmental impact assessment on nitric acid for import from the Hanford Purex facility at Washington state;

(2) what requirements exist for the conducting of an environmental impact assessment on consignments of contaminated nitric acid imported into the United Kingdom from the United States.

Mr. Atkins: I will write to the hon. Member.

Clearance Programmes (Accommodation)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that clearance programmes do not result in temporary accommodation for tenants while new starts are completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: None. The rehousing of those displaced by clearance is a matter for local authorities and the individuals concerned.

Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to produce an interim report on housing association programmes for the next three years; what are the available indicators for forecasting the effects of cuts in housing association grants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he plans to produce an interim report on the Housing Corporation's committed development programme for the next three years; what curtailments of this programme are projected following his Department's reduction in funding for this year; what effects the reduction in the subsequent year has been projected to have; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Housing Corporation published details of its approved development programme for the period 1994-95 to 1996-97 in December 1993. This took account of the outcome of last November's unified Budget, and set out the number of new lettings that it expected housing associations to be able to provide over the period together with the grants which the corporation expected to approve.

The Housing Corporation reviews housing association grant rates each year. The review considers changes in a range of public and private sector indicators of future earnings, construction costs, inflation and interest rates, in order to determine the likely impact of changes in HAG rates on rents, benefit dependency and the availability of private finance. I am currently considering the findings of the latest review and hope to announce decisions on the 1995-96 HAG rates shortly.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to ensure sufficient affordable housing in the rented sector is available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what new plans he has to ensure sufficient housing is available to allow occupants the freedom to choose between buying or renting properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department's plans are set out in the annual report, Cm. 2507. The Housing Corporation is investing some £1·5 billion this year, enabling housing associations, the main providers of new social housing, to provide over 58,000 homes in 1994-95. The corporation now estimates a total output of around 179,000 homes over the three years 1992-93 to 1994-95. This is some 26,000 more than we promised in 1992.

We have encouraged local authorities to make the most effective use of the council housing stock by keeping the number of empty dwellings to a minimum. We are also encouraging landlords to bring empty private sector properties back into use, for example, by means of grants to bring them up to standard and through the housing associations as managing agents—HAMA—scheme which aims to bring 10,000 units back into use by the end of 1995-96. To build on the existing management strengths of HAMA, an additional £5 million has been made available in 1994-95, under the HAMA-plus scheme, for capital works to bring empty private sector properties back up to standard. Housing benefit is available to those who have difficulty in meeting the full rent themselves.

We are committed to giving tenants the opportunity to become home owners. The right to buy has brought home ownership to nearly 1.5 million families in Great Britain and these opportunities have been broadened by rent to mortgage. Local authority cash incentive schemes and the Housing Corporation's tenants' incentive scheme have helped a further 21,000 people into their own homes, while releasing their existing accommodation for reletting to those in need. In addition, do-it-yourself shared ownership and other low-cost home ownership initiatives run by housing associations, are opening up home ownership opportunities where none previously existed.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to offset any reductions in the Housing Corporation's programme with increases in the private sector over the next three years.

Mr. Curry: My Department's plans are set out in its 1994 annual report, Cm. 2507.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he now forecasts *(a)* public sector, *(b)* Housing Association and *(c)* Housing Corporation housing starts to be for each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department does not prepare forecasts of new house-building starts. The Housing Corporation does not build houses. In its approved development programme, published in December 1993, the Housing Corporation expected to approve grants to housing associations for some 96,600 new homes to be provided through new build, renovation or the purchase of existing dwellings, across the period 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of housing is unfit in *(a)* Coventry, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Local authorities are requested to provide figures on their annual housing investment programme returns of dwellings in their area which are unfit. Coventry's 1993 HIP1 return did not provide a total for unfit dwellings, but its 1992 HIP1 showed 13 per cent. dwellings as unfit.

There are doubts about the quality of the data provided by some local authorities on numbers of unfit dwellings, and the 1991 English house condition survey provides a more reliable source for national and regional estimates. The EHCS shows that 5·6 per cent. of dwellings in the West Midlands were unfit and 7·6 per cent. in England.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about single regeneration budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Government offices for the regions and Government Departments have received several hundred responses and comments about the single regeneration budget including those made following consultation on the draft bidding guidance for the budget.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures are being taken to protect the existing spending commitments for current estate action schemes under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget;

(2) what measures are being taken to protect the existing spending commitments of the urban programme under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget;

(3) what measures are being taken to protect existing spending commitments for the inner city task forces under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget;

(4) what measures are being taken to protect existing spending commitments of city action teams under the new bidding regime of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 515, that continuing commitments under the 20 programmes which have been combined in the single regeneration budget will be met. These programmes include estate action, the urban programme, inner-city task forces and city action teams.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the successful bids under the single regeneration budget scheme.

Mr. Curry: I hope to be able to announce successful bids in early January 1995.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the housing implications for local authorities of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: The objectives of the single regeneration budget include the improvement of housing through physical improvements, greater choice and better management and maintenance. The budget will support this objective through meeting continuing commitments on housing-related programmes which have been combined in the Budget. These programmes include estate action, which is implemented by local authorities. The budget may also support housing measures which local authorities and their partners put forward for support in 1995-96 and later years through the current competitive bidding round for uncommitted budget resources.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors and charges in the 1991 index of local conditions are relevant to the single regeneration budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The relevance of the index of local conditions to the single regeneration budget is set out in paragraph 35 of the bidding guidance for the budget, issued on 14 April 1994, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of urban and regeneration expenditure, excluding urban programme, listed for each separate urban programme area for each year since 1980-81 at *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* current prices.

Mr. Curry: Information in the form requested for all programmes now combined in the single regeneration budget could be provided only at disproportionate cost as, for most of these programmes, it has not been the practice to collect information on a local authority district basis.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the outline bids at each regional office in respect of the single regeneration budget are now being worked up to be considered at the next stage of the process; and if he will make a statement on the progress to date.

Mr. Curry: It is for individual bidders to decide whether to work up bids to be submitted by 7 September. But, on the basis of existing information, about half of those who have expressed an interest in bidding are expected to work up their outline proposals for submission to the Government offices for the regions.

Care in the Community

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision has been made and what representations he has received for the housing implications of the care in the community programme for local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department has held a number of meetings with the local authority associations to discuss housing issues arising from the implementation of community care policies. Community care does not in itself create any new category of entitlement to housing, and we expect its impact on housing demand to be gradual and progressive. It is for local authorities to consider the resource implications of community care and to prepare housing strategies to meet housing needs in their areas.

Water Charges

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the subject of the future of water charges *(a)* in relation to meters, *(b)* using the council tax banding system and *(c)* exemptions for churches and other religious buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Representations are received by the Department from time to time about alternative methods of charging for water, including the use of meters and council tax valuation bands. No representations have been received about exempting churches and other religious buildings from water charges. It is for each water company to determine the basis for charging in its area.

Council Tax

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many appeals have been received regarding council tax bands; how many succeeded; how many have failed; and how many were outstanding at the latest date for which he has information;

(2) what information he has on the success or failure rate of appeals against council tax banding to the latest date for which figures are available, both in number and percentage terms.

Mr. Curry: The latest available figures are for the end of June. Some 919,025 proposals had been made in respect

of dwellings in England. 412,185 had been settled, of which some 330,000—36 per cent.—resulted in a change of banding, leaving 506,840 outstanding.

Planning Applications (Green Belt)

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the reasons for normally allowing costs to be awarded against the applicant in planning applications rejected by both the local planning authority and also at appeal but not usually in cases where a planning application involves green belt land where the application is called in; and what plans he has to change this policy.

Mr. Curry: I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the importance to Her Majesty's Government's policy of sustainable development of protecting green belt land from further development.

Mr. Curry: Paragraph 2.10 of the draft revision of the proposed new planning policy guidance note 2 on green belts, which was issued for public consultation on 21 February, proposes that when drawing green belt boundaries in development plans local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. There is a presumption against inappropriate development within a green belt.

We are analysing the responses made to the PPG2 consultation document.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what agencies within his Department oversee the management and development control of green belt land.

Mr. Curry: The Secretary of State carries out his planning functions relating to the control of development in green belts with assistance from his planning policy division, Government offices in the regions, and the planning inspectorate.

Neighbourhood Councils

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what duty exists for local authorities to ensure that the boundaries of any neighbourhood council of committees which they may constitute, as part of a programme of devolving their powers to localities and communities, are determined fairly and impartially.

Mr. Curry: It is for the individual local authorities to decide the boundaries of any neighbourhood council or committee which they establish. But the membership of any committee or sub-committee of a local authority to which the authority delegates its powers must, under the provisions of section 15 of the Housing and Local Government Act 1989, reflect the overall political balance of the authority.

Also, all councillors must sign a declaration of acceptance of office which includes an undertaking that they will be guided by the national code of local government conduct in the performance of their duties as councillors. Among other things, the code states that a councillors overriding duty is to the whole local community and that they have a special duty to their constituents including those who did not vote for them.

First-time Buyers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce new incentives to first-time buyers to alleviate problems in this section of the market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: First-time buyers and other home purchasers will continue to benefit from the range of Government policies which have brought about substantial falls in interest rates and have made home ownership more affordable than for many years.

Planning Process

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy regarding the need to disclose investment plans of applicants in the planning process to ensure the viability of the scheme under consideration.

Mr. Curry: The Government do not have a policy regarding the investment plans of planning applicants. Planning applications should be considered only on their land-use planning merits. The viability of a proposed scheme would be a commercial decision for the developer.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his inspectors take at public inquiries to ensure that time and resources are not wasted by the unpreparedness of witnesses; and what steps are taken to recover costs where such unpreparedness results in important information being unavailable to the inquiry.

Mr. Curry: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Planning Inspectorate executive agency under its chief executive and chief planning inspector, Mr. H. Stephen Crow. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from H. S. Crow to Mr. Peter Ainsworth, dated 20 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply to your Question about steps taken by inspectors to ensure that time is not wasted at public inquiries by the unpreparedness of witnesses; and what steps are taken to recover costs where such unpreparedness results in important information being unavailable to the inquiry.

Depending on whether the decision on the case is to be taken by the Secretary of State or the Inspector, the procedure at planning inquiries is governed by The Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1992 or The Town and Country Planning (Determination by Inspectors) (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1992 [Statutory Instruments 1992 Nos. 2038 and 2039 respectively]. Both sets of Rules require proofs of evidence and summaries to be submitted not later than three weeks before the date fixed for the inquiry or by a date programmed by the Inspector. The aim is to make the inquiry process as efficient and effective as possible, whilst impairing neither the fairness nor the impartiality of the proceedings, nor the ability of participants to make representations which are relevant to the decision (paragraphs 5-8 of DoE Circular 24/92).

If a person who proposes to give evidence by reading a proof of evidence has not submitted that proof in advance, the Inspector at the inquiry has to consider, in the light of any submissions by other parties, what course of action would be in the public interest. Options could include having the witness read out the full proof, adjourning the inquiry to allow everyone to study the proof, and re-programming the witness to appear later. It is for the Inspector alone to decide what course to take.

Whether or not he or she has submitted a proof of evidence, a witness is sometimes unable to answer a question during

cross-examination. If the information is important, the Inspector may ask the witness to obtain it and return to answer the question later. Meanwhile the inquiry will continue. Alternatively the Inspector may adjourn the inquiry whilst the witness obtains the information.

The policy on the award of costs incurred in planning inquiries is set out in DoE Circular 8/93. Before an award of costs is made, three conditions will normally need to be met (paragraph 6 of Annex 1 of the Appendix to Circular 8/93).

Briefly these are:

(1) one of the parties has sought an award at the inquiry;
(2) the party against whom costs are sought has behaved unreasonably; and
(3) this unreasonable conduct has caused the party seeking costs to incur expense unnecessarily.

Therefore, at the inquiry an application for an award of costs may be made to the Inspector if a party considers that the unpreparedness of a witness has amounted to unreasonable behaviour and that such conduct has caused unnecessary expense. There is no other sanction (paragraph 9 of Circular 24/92). The Inspector will hear submissions from both parties. The decision on the award of costs will not normally be issued until the decision on the merits of the case has been issued.

Redhill Aerodrome

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to consider any further proposed developments at Redhill aerodrome for a designated period of years if the current planning application fails.

Mr. Curry: No. It will remain the case that any application for development at the aerodrome will need to be considered on its merits, having regard to the development plan, so far as it is material to the application, and any other material considerations.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from (i) commercial interests and (ii) representatives of local communities, regarding the proposal to develop an international airport at Redhill.

Mr. Curry: None. It is understood that representations have been made to the inspector following the close of the public inquiry. We will consider what action is necessary on such post-inquiry representations when the inspector has submitted his report, and if any are considered to be material to the decision, they will be made available to principal parties for comment before a final decision is taken.

Mandatory Grants System

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to make an announcement about the future of the mandatory grants system; what further arrangements he plans to make for consultation following that announcement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer to the reply given to the hon. Member by the then Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction on 27 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *205*.

Departmental Staff (Contracts)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the numbers of persons and the percentage of those who were or are in *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time employment who had no time-limiter contract in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1994 respectively.

Mr. Curry: The following information covers non-industrial staff in my Department, excluding Property Services Agency Services, as at 1 April in each year:

Year	*Part-time*	*Percentage*	*Full-time*	*Percentage*
1984	217	3·7	5,857	96·3
1994	399	6·3	6,002	93·8

Canterbury City Council

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take, in the light of the findings of his Department's inquiries, to ensure that correct contracting and accountancy practices are implemented by Canterbury city council's works and services department.

Mr. Curry: Canterbury city council has been investigating the accounts and operation of its works and services department, with the involvement of the external auditor and the police. My right hon. Friend has requested and recently received a report from the authority. He is now considering whether statutory action under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation is called for. I shall write to the hon. Member when that decision is taken.

Construction Industry

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he now forecasts the total of new starts to be as a percentage of the construction industry's work load for each of the next three years.

Mr. Curry: I do not make any such forecasts.

Airport Developments

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to confine new airport development to areas currently undergoing regeneration.

Mr. Curry: Aviation policy is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Decisions on any proposal for airport development would involve a wide range of considerations, including, where relevant, regeneration benefits.

Conservation (Africa)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held with the Zimbabwe Government over the future of the black rhino and the African elephant.

Mr. Atkins: My noble Friend Lord Strathclyde had such discussions with Dr. Murerwa, the Zimbabwean Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, when he visited the country in 1992. Officials of my Department have had frequent contacts with their colleagues in Zimbabwe on these matters, notably in Harare during the United Kingdom-led EC fact-finding mission on the African elephant issue in late 1992 and last year in Nairobi at the United Nations Environment Programme rhino conservation conference.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has available on the white rhino population in Africa.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated figures for 1993 indicate that the total number of white rhino in Africa is 5,821. This represents an increase of over 1,000 since 1990. The rise is evident only in South Africa which holds 5,300 of the species.

Market Franchise Rights

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his intentions regarding market franchise rights; and if he will consult all affected parties before any final decisions are taken on this issue.

Mr. Curry: We have now obtained the views of all the main interested parties on how they see the future of market franchises. We are now carefully considering these views, and once we have reached our conclusions we shall announce how we intend to take matters forward.

Magill Inquiry

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how frequently Mr. Magill updates his Department on the cost of his inquiry into Westminster county council.

Mr. Curry: Mr. Magill does not report to the Department.

Canada Geese

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences have been issued to cull Canada geese in the last two years; to whom they were issued; and how many geese were killed.

Mr. Atkins: Some 77 licences were issued by this Department and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to cull Canada geese in 1992. The corresponding figure for 1993 was 71. The number of birds killed were 1,175 and 1,310 respectively. Information that would identify the applicant for a licence is normally regarded as confidential.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what grounds he has issued licences to cull Canada geese; and if he will give details of the methods of control recommended by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: Licences have been issued to control Canada geese to conserve wild birds and collections of wild birds, and to preserve public health or public safety.

It is a matter for applicants for licences to select control methods that are not prohibited by the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This week we published a leaflet prepared by my Department, on advice from its Canada goose working group, which gives guidance on legal methods for controlling the species, including shooting, egg pricking and a range of non-lethal scaring and habitat management techniques.

Hosepipe Ban (Worcestershire)

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with the chairman of Ofwat the hosepipe ban on parts of Worcestershire with a view to ensuring that Severn-Trent Water Authority plan for and invest in capacity which prevents a similar occurrence in the future.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General of Water Services, the head of the Office of Water Services, has already established reference points for levels of service, including the frequency of hosepipe bans, on which water undertakers must report annually. This information is published and feeds into the investment planning of the undertakers, the Director General's consequent determinations on water pricing and his reviews of their performance.

Council Tenancies (Hull)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants of the North Hull housing action trust from 1 Avenue, Greenwood avenue and South close have chosen to return to council tenancies; what are the reasons for the delay in returning tenancies to the council; and when he will give his consent for the transfer of tenancies to the council.

Mr. Curry: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Gummer: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994, Ministers in my Department have made 21 overseas visits in their official capacity. Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

"Crumbling Heritage"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to follow up the report by Professor R. U. Cooke, vice chancellor of York, entitled "Crumbling Heritage".

Mr. Curry: The Building Research Establishment has a substantial on-going programme of research in this area and has taken cognisance of the "Crumbling Heritage" report. The programme includes work on stone durability, selection, cleaning and repair. The Building Research Establishment operates a heritage support service which provides advice on request.

Drinking Water

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the fourth annual report of the drinking water inspectorate will be published.

Mr. Atkins: The drinking water inspectorate published its fourth annual report today. Once again, it shows that drinking water in England and Wales is of a very high quality. In 1993, 98·9 per cent. of the 3·5 million tests carried out by water companies on drinking water met the relevant standard, compared with 98·7 per cent. in 1992.

The report provides a detailed picture of water quality in England and Wales which has been tested against the stringent criteria of the water quality regulations which incorporate the limits in the EC drinking water directive.

The inspectorate is also publishing a leaflet called "How Good is our Drinking Water?", which summarises the main points of the report.

Copies of the report and leaflet have been placed in the Library of the House.

Peat Extraction

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the publication of the report from the working group on peat extraction and related matters, which his Department set up in 1992.

Mr. Curry: The report from the working group will be published during the first part of next month. It will be accompanied by a draft, for consultation, of a minerals planning guidance note on peat relating to England. Copies of the documents will be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the sales of the Property Services Agency's building management businesses.

Mr. Curry: In accordance with the respective share sale agreements, the consideration for each business has been adjusted to reflect the difference between the net asset value of the business estimated prior to completion, and the actual net asset value as determined after completion.

I can now advise that the agreed consideration adjustments made by PSA Services to the purchasers are as follows:

Business	*Purchaser*	*Adjustment* £
BM Scotland	Serco	725,179
Noreast BM	John Mowlem Construction plc	2,801,391
BM Manchester	W. S. Atkins	3,607,697
BM South East	Building and Property Management Services Ltd.	1,979,677
BM South and West	(Amec-Pell Frischmann Consortium)	3,873,662

Planning Guidance (Coal Extraction)

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish revised planning guidance on coal extraction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have published new planning guidance for coal today. The guidance replaced the guidance in MPG3, published in 1988, and the interim planning guidance announced by the then Secretary of State on 25 March 1993.

The guidance seeks to provide a policy framework for mineral planning authorities and the industry to ensure that the extraction of coal and disposal of colliery spoil can take place in accordance with the full and proper protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. The Government believe that this can best be done through a clear and consistent planning approach at the local level within a broad national policy framework.

The best way of striking the balance between the economic importance of this indigenous energy resource and the protection of the environment is through the careful consideration of individual applications within the framework of the development plan led system.

The guidance provides a stronger environmental framework than the existing guidance published in 1988. But I am confident that it will enable the industry to develop the mineral resource in a way that has proper regard to local concerns and is fully compatible with economic growth, the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development.

Hedgerows

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor hedgerows.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce the results of the survey we commissioned recently from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to provide an up-to-date picture of changes in the numbers of hedgerows in the countryside of England and Wales. By using comparable methodology to countryside survey 90, this most recent study enables a comparison between changes recorded during the period 1984-90 with those during the period 1990-93.

The results show that the annual rate of hedgerow removal has declined from 9,500 km per year in 1984-90, to 3,600 km per year during 1990-93. Expressed as a percentage of existing hedgerow stock this represents a halving of the rate at which hedges are being grubbed up, from 1·7 per cent. to 0·8 per cent. per year. Furthermore, the annual gains from hedge planting have more than doubled from 1,900 km per year during 1984-90, to 4,400 km per year during 1990-93. The rate of removal is now outweighed by the rate of new planting.

The downward trend in hedgerow removal is welcome, and is consistent with the change in agricultural policies in recent years towards greater emphasis on care of the countryside. Schemes such as environmentally sensitive areas introduced in 1987 and countryside stewardship launched in 1991, have encouraged the conservation of hedgerows.

While these results provide good evidence that widespread removal in the countryside is not the problem it was, nevertheless some 3,600 km of hedgerow on average are being removed annually. We remain committed to protecting hedges of key importance, and we are therefore considering carefully how to focus protection on the highly valuable hedges, for which no amount of replanting can substitute—for example, an ancient parish boundary hedge.

The survey reveals that changes in hedgerow stocks have also occurred as a result of changes in management. 22,500 km per year became classified as relict hedges during 1990-93, as compared with 7,400 km per year during 1984-90. Such changes occurred where hedges ceased to be cut and managed as hedges and grow into lines of bushes or trees. This trend was offset in part by restoration of relict hedges which increased from 2·400 km per year, to 5,700 km per year. For the future, the hedgerow incentive scheme, which was launched in England in 1992, and the hedgerow restoration scheme in Wales, should increasingly work with the farm and conservation grant scheme and the environmentally sensitive areas scheme to encourage retention in active management of hedgerows of particular historic, wildlife or landscape value.

Council Leaseholders (Property Sales)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to introduce a financial concession to assist local authorities to help council leaseholders who are finding it difficult to sell their flats.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to introduce the financial concession to assist local authorities to help council leaseholders who are finding it difficult to sell their flats.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend had hoped to lay an order before the recess to implement a limited concession to help certain leaseholders. A draft order has been prepared but we have agreed to defer laying it in response to representations from the local authority associations that they and other interested parties should have an opportunity to consider the concession alongside other measures which we are proposing to assist leaseholders in difficulty with the resale of former council flats and with service charges. The draft order will therefore be included in a discussion paper to be issued to the associations, the National Federation of Council Leaseholders and others next week. Comments will be invited by mid-September and we hope to reach a conclusion shortly thereafter. A copy of the discussion paper will be placed in the Library.

Newsprint

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a mandatory minimum proportion of recycled fibre content in newsprint.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 20 June 1994]:* Our policy is to help promote waste minimisation and value recovery from waste, including recycling, through the producer responsibility initiative. This entails an industry assuming a share of the responsibility for dealing with the waste arising from its products. In the case of the newsprint industry, our discussions have focused on the proportion of recycled fibre content in newsprint. Under this broad approach, the solutions which are adopted are likely to be more flexible and cost-effective than a statutorily imposed regime.

Rents

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out for each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 the mean and median rents paid by local authority, housing association and private sector tenants, dividing the latter two groups into fair rented and non-fair rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The available information is given in the tables.

Mean and median net rents by tenancy type—England

(£ per annum)

Tenancy type	*1993-94*
Rented from local authority	
Mean	870
Median	580
Rented from housing association	
FAIR	
Mean	1,090
Median	1,040
ASSURED	
Mean	990
Median	520
Rented privately	
FAIR	
Mean	880
Median	870
ASSURED	
Mean	2,790
Median	2,280
OTHER[1]	
Mean	1,650
Median	1,260

[1] Rented—other includes rents such as those paid to resident landlords, for lets with the job, college lets, or regulated tenancies without a registered fair rent.
Source: Survey of English Housing.

Equivalent information for early years is available only for Great Britain and by calendar year as follows.

Mean and median net rents by tenancy type—Great Britain[1]

(£ per annum)

	Rented from local authority		*Rented from housing association*		*Rented privately*			
					Unfurnished		*Furnished*	
Year	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mean*	*Median*	*Mean*	*Median*
1988	490	420	640	760	890	750	1,590	1,310
1989	500	500	600	700	900	800	1,800	1,300
1990	650	560	780	840	1,270	990	2,440	1,720
1991	720	570	760	780	1,470	1,040	2,830	1,890
1992	750	540	990	830	1,730	1,280	2,640	2,280

[1] Net rent is gross rent less any rent rebate (Housing benefit) received.
Source: Family Expenditure Survey.
The rents shown are from sample surveys and are subject to sampling error. This accounts for some of the apparent year to year variations.

Docklands Light Railway

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the consultation paper published in 1994 by the promoters canvassing the possibility of building the Docklands light railway Lewisham extension without building a station at Island Gardens; what was the cost of the consultation exercise; and what was the cost to public funds of the hearing before the Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords.

Mr. Curry: *[holding answer 14 July 1994]:* The cost to the docklands light railway and London Docklands development corporation's consultation exercise set out proposals on stations originally planned for the Lewisham extension both north and south of the river, was

approximately £25,000. This includes the costs of printing and distributing the consultation paper and report. It also includes the costs of seeking additional financial contributions from third parties towards project costs. The cost to the promoters of their represention before the Lord Chairman of Committees was approximately £30,000. I understand that the hearing itself caused no additional cost to public funds except for an estimated £355 for the publication of the chairman's determination on Island Gardens station.

Nitrous Oxide

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study he is undertaking of the effect of nitrous oxide on the rate of stone building decay.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is undertaking no studies of the effect of nitrous oxide on the rate of stone building decay.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

United Nations Conference on Population and Development

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support strongly paragraphs 7.42 and 7.43 on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the draft final document for the international conference on population and development in Cairo.

Mr. Baldry: We have supported statements in the document which calls for efforts to meet the special needs of young people. We shall continue to do so in preparations for the conference with our EU partners. We recognise that for some delegations this is a difficult issue. However, it is important to ensure that all young people are able to get the information and services they need to keep healthy, and that negotiations continue, in Cairo, to find acceptable language in support of this goal.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to seek to safeguard the rights of adolescents to privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and respect at the United Nations conference on population and development in Cairo.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my answer concerning meeting the needs of young people. We support statements that call for adolescents to be able to access reproductive health information and services provided in a responsible and culturally sensitive fashion, and with due regard to general principles of health care practice—including privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and, of course, respect.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make British cargo aircraft available to meet the food crisis in Zaire arising from refugees from Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: We are making two aircraft available to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for an unspecified period for the collection and delivery of priority relief needs.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how each of the G7 states have responded to the appeal by the President of the Organisation of African Unity, the President of Tunisia, that they should support African troops with the necessary logistical support in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: In response to requests by the United Nations to provide logistical support to UNAMIR, Italy has agreed to provide one C130 aircraft plus crew, plus a possible six fuel/water trucks; Canada is providing a signals squadron plus aircraft; the US 50 armoured personnnel carriers plus other unspecified support for the Ghanaian contingent; Her Majesty's Government have provided 50 4×4 trucks; Japan has contributed $3 million towards costs of equipment and France is engaged in Operation Turquoise. So far there has been no indication of any German contribution.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many postcards, letters and proforma letters his Department have received on the subject of Rwanda, whether sent directly or forwarded by hon. Members, *(a)* in the last month and *(b)* in the last two months.

Mr. Baldry: In June we received approximately 1,470 letters and cards about Rwanda. Just over 1,300 were received in May.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of humanitarian need at Goma and other places in Zaire arising from the influx of refugees from Rwanda; and what international arrangements have been made to meet those needs.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent additional emergency steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to assist in the refugee crisis in Rwanda.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest figures for Government aid to the state of Rwanda.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what his Department has done to alleviate the plight and suffering of refugees in Rwanda over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with voluntary aid agencies and churches in the United Kingdom on action to alleviate the plight of refugees in Rwanda; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what current assessment his Department has made of the scale of the refugee situation in states bordering Rwanda since the outbreak of civil war and genocide in that country; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what current assessment his Department has made of the scale of the refugee situation in Rwanda; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what his Department has done to alleviate the plight and suffering of refugees in states bordering Rwanda since the ourtbreak of civil war and genocide in that country; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what discussions his Department has had with voluntary aid agencies and churches in the United Kingdom on action to alleviate the plight of refugees in states bordering Rwanda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total value of aid given for humanitarian relief that has been spent *(a)* in Rwanda and *(b)* in each of the neighbouring countries since the refugee crisis began in April.

Mr. Baldry: In the past 12 months Britain has provided £12·5 million emergency aid directly for people affected by the civil war in Rwanda, of which £11 million has been committed since early April. This includes £2·5 million for those within the country, £1·5 million for those in Zaire, £4·2 million for those in Tanzania, £0·6 million for those in Burundi.

We have been monitoring the situation closely through reports from international agencies and non-governmental organisations and have sent two assessment missions to the region, most recently from 10 to 14 July.

Within the last week we have provided three relief flights to Goma containing vehicles, personnel, blankets, plastic sheeting and water carriers, and have provided an air bridge at Goma to assist with the overall airlift on behalf of the UN high commissioner for refugees. At their request two additional air bridge teams are being sent to Bukavu in Zaire and Entebbe in Uganda.

The Government are also fully funding two further flights organised by the British Red Cross, and are providing two chartered aircraft for use by UNHCR within the region; as well as helping with a number of other British NGOs who are mobilising resources and organising their own airlifts.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council agreed on 18 July to allocate £120 million from existing Lomé funds to finance humanitarian assistance in Rwanda: this is subject to the agreement of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. This is in addition to over £100 million of emergency aid provided for Rwandan refugees since last year, including the cost of 40,000 tons of food aid now in transit through Uganda.

The Government continue to monitor the situation extremely closely. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be visiting the region next week.

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the delays, with times, and places, suffered by the present RMS St. Helena because of engine malfunction since it was brought into service.

Mr. Baldry: Details of the delays, with dates and places, suffered by the present RMS St. Helena because of engine malfunction since the vessel entered service are as follows:

Date	*Location*	*Details*	*Delay to Service*
5 January 1991	Off Lisbon	Main starboard engine connecting rod disintegration.	Vessel out of service for 92 days.
11 April 1993	On passage Tristan da Cunha to Cape Town	Starboard main engine gear train failure. Temporary repairs in Cape Town.	11 days.
9 February 1994	On passage Inaccessible Island to Cape Town.	Port main engine exhaust valve failure.	2 days.
18 May 1994	On passage Tenerife to Ascension Island	Repeat of starboard engine gear train failure of 11 April 1993.	21 days of voyage abandoned.

Somalia

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department has done to alleviate the plight and suffering of refugees in Somalia over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In the past 12 months more than £4·3 million has been given in general humanitarian assistance to Somalia. It is not possible to distinguish how much of this benefited refugees.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current assessment his Department has made of the scale of the refugee situation in Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: According to UNHCR there are only some 400 refugees from other countries in Somalia. This is much fewer than the number of internally displaced people in the country. No statistics are held for these.

East Africa

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current assessment his Department has made of the scale of the refugee situation in those states of east Africa bordering on to countries in which there is civil war and starvation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: According to latest information received from UNHCR, there are the following number of refugees from other countries in the region: Ethiopia 250,000; Somalia 400; Sudan 750,000; Kenya 370,000; Uganda 300,000; Tanzania 1·025 million. It is not known how many refugees there are in Eritrea.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions his Department has had with voluntary aid agencies and churches in the United Kingdom on action to alleviate the plight of refugees in those states of east Africa bordering on the countries in which there is civil war and starvation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions his Department has had with voluntary aid agencies and churches in the United Kingdom on action to alleviate the plight of refugees in Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development regularly meets representatives of non-governmental organisations about humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa, including Somalia. In addition ODA representatives regularly attend meetings of the Africa committee of the Refugee Council to discuss current matters of concern.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department has done to alleviate the plight and suffering of refugees in those states of east Africa bordering on to countries in which there is civil war and starvation over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In addition to the substantial programmes for Rwandan refugees and for humanitarian assistance to Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan, the United Kingdom has provided in the past twelve months over £1·1 million in refugee grants for projects run by United Kingdom non-government organisations in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and eastern Sudan.

In addition, £1 million was paid to the United Nations high commissioner for refugees towards care and maintenance programmes for Somali and other refugees in Kenya. At the same time £500,000 was provided to UNHCR for maintenance of Somali refugee camps in Ethiopia and the reintegration of Ethiopian refugees and for a repatriation programme for Ethiopian refugees from Sudan.

Belize-Guatemala Road Link

Mr. Mans To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments with regard to the United Kingdom's 1991 aid pledge for a joint Belize—Guatemala road link.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have decided to authorise the Belize element of the Government's pledge. Subject to satisfactory appraisal, the £7·5 million Belizean share of the pledge will be used to contribute to the financing of the southern highway project, which is the Belize Government's next infrastructure priority.

As relations between Belize and Guatemala develop, we hope to be able to proceed with the Guatemala element of the aid commitment.

Natural Resources Institute

Mr. Mans To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what performance targets have been set for the current year for the Overseas Development Administration's executive agency, the Natural Resources Institute.

Mr. Baldry: The institute's principal performance targets for 1994-95 are: to recover the full economic costs of its ordinary activities; to achieve a further increase of 20 per cent. in the volume of work done for non-ODA clients, with an increase of 35 per cent. in the value of net income from this source; and to secure a reduction in the real cost of operational time charged to clients to below the 1992-93 level, thereby recovering the 5·2 per cent. efficiency loss in 1993-94.

Nigeria

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the background of Judge Sylvanus Karibi-Whyte who has been seconded from the United Nations Commission on war crimes in former Yugoslavia to chair the constitutional conference in Nigeria; what further steps his Department is taking to assist with the work of the conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Justice Adolphus Godwin Karibi-Whyte was appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 1984. He was elected to the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal at the International Court of Human Rights in The Hague on 17 September 1993, and was appointed chairman of the national constitutional conference on 17 June 1994.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) described our assistance to the conference in his reply of 5 July at columns *118-19*. We would be prepared to consider any further requests for help.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of foreign inmates *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons in England and Wales on 11 July.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of foreign inmates *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held in prisons in England and Wales on 11 July.

The latest available provisional information is for 31 May 1994. On that date there were approximately 3,780 non-British citizens (3,470 males and 310 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. This includes about 600 male and 20 female nationals from the Irish Republic. Approximately a further 470 persons had no nationality recorded.

I also wrote to you on 31 January in reply to your Questions about the number of foreign nationals from varying countries who were detained in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. Unfortunately, those detained under Immigration Act powers were omitted from the information provided. I attach revised tables. A copy of these tables has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Population in Prison Service Establishments, in England and Wales, by type of prisoner and nationality as at 30 September 1993

Nationality	Type of Prisoner					
	Male			Female		
	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]
United Kingdom	10,248	30,352	40,760	364	988	1,358
All non-British Nationals	715	2,042	3,176	73	192	295

Nationality	Type of Prisoner					
	Male			Female		
	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]
Not recorded	43	548	601	2	17	21
Europe						
Albania	1	—	2	—	—	—
Andorra	2	8	10	—	—	—
Armenia	1	—	1	—	—	—
Austria	1	4	6	—	—	—
Belgium	9	13	22	—	1	1
Cyprus	8	35	46	1	1	2
Czechoslovakia	1	2	3	—	—	—
Denmark	—	3	3	—	—	—
Finland	—	1	1	—	—	—
France	13	16	35	2	2	4
German Democratic Republic	2	1	4	—	—	—
German Federal Republic	11	26	37	3	—	3
Gibraltar	—	1	1	—	1	1
Greece	1	10	12	—	1	1
Hungary	1	2	3	—	1	1
Irish Republic	157	367	526	2	10	12
Italy	19	43	62	—	4	4
Luxembourg	—	1	1	—	—	—
Malta	2	6	8	—	—	—
Netherlands	35	52	87	4	6	10
Norway	—	—	1	—	—	—
Poland	—	7	8	—	1	2
Portugal	13	14	28	3	—	3
Romania	1	1	10	—	—	—
Spain	15	19	35	2	—	2
Sweden	—	2	2	—	—	—
Switzerland	—	1	1	—	1	1
Turkey	16	48	84	—	1	1
USSR	—	—	2	—	—	1
Yugoslavia	1	9	12	—	—	—
Middle East						
Afghanistan	1	2	3	—	—	—
Bahrain	—	1	1	—	—	—
Egypt	—	4	6	—	—	—
Iran	2	20	25	—	1	1
Israel	3	10	14	—	—	—
Iraq	1	5	6	—	—	—
Jordan	2	6	8	1	—	1
Kuwait	—	2	2	—	—	—
Lebanon	3	8	14	—	—	—
Saudi Arabia	—	1	1	—	—	—
Sierre Leone	2	6	19	—	—	—
Syrian Arab Republic	2	1	4	—	—	—
United Arab Emirates	—	2	2	—	—	—
Yemen Arab Republic (North)	1	—	1	—	—	—
Yemen Peoples Democratic Republic (South)	1	1	2	—	—	—
India	35	148	293	—	10	10
Pakistan	55	188	257	2	6	9
Bangladesh	6	35	43	—	—	—
Hong Kong	—	5	6	—	1	1
Other Asia						
Burma	—	2	2	—	—	—
China	3	7	14	—	1	2
British India Ocean Territory	2	1	3	—	—	—
Indonesia	—	—	1	—	—	—
Korea Republic (South)	—	1	1	—	2	2
Malaysia	3	4	8	1	—	1
Nepal	1	—	1	—	—	—
Philippines	—	3	3	1	1	2
Sri Lanka	3	12	17	—	—	—
Singapore	3	3	6	—	—	—
Thailand	—	2	2	—	1	1
Vietnam	6	8	14	—	—	—
Africa						
Algeria	—	6	30	—	—	—
Angola	—	5	13	—	—	—
Ascension Island	—	—	1	—	—	—
Benin	—	—	—	—	1	1

Nationality	Type of Prisoner					
	Male			Female		
	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]	Remand	Sentenced[1]	All[2]
Cameroon	—	—	1	—	—	—
Central African Republic	4	2	6	—	—	—
Congo	—	—	2	—	—	—
Ivory Coast	1	1	4	—	—	1
Ethiopia	1	2	3	—	—	—
Ghana	16	34	78	5	18	24
Gambia	—	4	4	—	—	—
Guinea	—	—	2	—	—	—
Kenya	2	25	30	1	—	1
Liberia	1	1	4	—	—	—
Libya	1	7	10	—	—	—
Morocco	6	18	29	—	1	1
Mauritania	—	2	2	—	1	1
Mauritius	1	8	9	—	—	—
Malawi	—	3	4	—	1	1
Mayotte	1	—	1	—	—	—
Niger	—	—	1	—	—	—
Nigeria	37	120	217	14	47	71
Senegal	—	—	1	—	—	—
Seychelles	1	4	5	—	—	—
Sudan	—	—	2	—	1	1
St. Helena	—	1	1	—	—	—
Somalia	9	9	23	—	—	—
Tunisia	—	6	7	—	—	—
Tanzania	4	3	10	1	—	1
Uganda	4	13	23	—	—	—
South Africa	3	17	22	—	2	2
Zambia	4	3	7	—	1	1
Zaire	2	4	25	—	—	—
Zimbabwe	2	9	11	—	—	—
Caribbean						
Antigua	2	7	9	—	—	—
Barbados	2	13	15	1	1	2
Costa Rica	—	1	1	—	—	—
Cuba	—	1	1	—	—	—
Dominica	—	7	7	—	—	—
Dominican Republic	1	3	4	—	1	1
Grenada	2	5	7	—	1	1
Haiti	—	—	1	—	—	—
Jamaica	110	317	440	17	30	55
St. Lucia	4	12	17	—	—	—
Monserrat	—	2	2	—	—	—
St. Christopher and Nevis	—	2	2	—	—	—
Trinidad and Tobago	4	10	14	—	—	—
St. Vincent and Grenadines	—	10	10	—	1	1
United States of America	15	37	56	3	17	20
Canada	4	13	18	—	1	1
America (North and South)						
Argentina	3	1	4	—	—	—
Belize	—	1	1	—	—	—
Bolivia	—	2	2	—	1	1
Brazil	1	4	6	1	2	3
Cayman Islands	—	1	1	—	—	—
Chile	—	4	4	2	—	2
Colombia	2	42	52	1	4	5
Guyana	6	20	26	2	6	13
Mexico	—	1	1	—	—	—
Peru	—	6	7	—	—	—
Surinam	1	—	1	—	—	—
Uruguay	1	1	2	—	—	—
Venezuela	—	3	3	—	—	1
Australia	6	18	25	1	—	1
New Zealand	3	11	14	1	1	2
Oceania						
Fiji	1	—	1	—	—	—
Guam	—	—	—	1	—	1
Papua New Guinea	1	—	1	—	—	—
Solomon Islands	1	—	1	—	—	—

[1] Includes persons committed in default of payment of a fine.
[2] Includes Immigration Act detainees and non-criminal prisoners.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Howard: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislative and administrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate, and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality business support across the country.

Since July 1993, the Home Office has demonstrated its continued commitment to helping small businesses through deregulation. Steps taken have included simplifying the law on Sunday trading and on football pools, and legislative proposals, in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, to introduce a system of children's certificates for licensed premises, and to end restrictions on weekday shopping hours and Sunday racing and betting. We have announced our intention to remove various restrictions on betting offices, and to bring forward a measure under the order-making power in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill to repeal the provision in the Licensing Act 1964, which makes it an offence to sell someone more alcohol than they have asked for. In addition, small businesses have been consulted in the course of a fundamental review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971, and in the subsequent inter-departmental review of the enforcement of fire safety regulations. The Government are now considering the outcome of these reviews, and paying particular attention to the needs of small businesses in this context.

In the past year, 32 of the 71 regulations affecting business for which the Home Office is responsible have been reviewed. A programme for the review of the remainder is now being developed. This programme, which will also cover other deregulatory work, will include targets for the various items in the programme.

Much of the deregulatory work undertaken in the past year in the Home Office has carried forward work started in the previous 12 months. This had included proposals for legislation to clarify the law on Sunday trading, consultation exercises on greyhound racing and liquor licensing, and the start of the review of all the regulations affecting business for which the Home Office is responsible.

The Department's work on deregulations has been complemented by efforts to help small businesses protect themselves against crime, and to help those who wish to bid for Home Office business. In 1993, the Home Office crime prevention unit published a research paper "The Prevention of Crime Against Small Businesses: The Safer Cities Experience" which examined the effectiveness of crime prevention schemes directed at small business. The Home Office crime prevention centre has also published a guide on retail security to help police officers advise small retailers on protection against burglary. In addition, the National Board for Crime Prevention—a non-departmental public body for which the Home Office is responsible—has recently set up a retail action group to look at crime and its effect on the retail sector. This group plans to issue guidance on various aspects of crime prevention which should help small businesses. The Home Office is also carrying out a survey for the international business crime survey of large and small business premises to enable the relative risks for different types of premises to be estimated.

On procurement, it is the Home Office's policy to give encouragement and assistance to small businesses wherever possible. To that end, over the past 12 months we have again revised and re-issued a booklet: "Selling to the Home Office", which details the Department's purchasing needs, and gives specific contact points for initial approaches. A central contact point for general inquiries is also available. The Home Office does not, however, hold detailed information on the volume of business placed with small firms.

Young Offenders

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were detained in adult prisons each year since 1991.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of juveniles detained in adult prisons each year since 1991.

The attached table gives information on youths aged 17 or under who were first received into an adult Prison Service establishment in England and Wales since 1991.

Youths[1] first received into an adult Prison Service establishment in England and Wales 1991 to 1993

Year	Type of first reception: Remand	[2]Sentenced
1991	1,565	878
1992	751	472
[3]1993	570	180

[1] Persons aged 17 years or under.
[2] Includes fine defaulters. This may include some previously received as a remand prisoner into an adult establishment.
[3] Provisional figures.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange for funds generated from fines for speeding offences detected by cameras to be passed to local police authorities for funding further provision of speed cameras and the staff necessary to administer the processing of the offences.

Mr. Maclean: No. The income from criminal penalties, including fixed penalties and court fines for traffic offences, goes directly to the Consolidated Fund at the Exchequer.

Fire Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will clarify the London fire and civil defence authority's reasons for not having five pumping applicances in the north-east area of the London fire brigade available for operational service on the night of Sunday 26 June.

Mr. Maclean: I have been informed by the chief fire officer that on the evening of 26 June five pumping appliances were unavailable because of unusually high levels of sick leave. The brigade was nevertheless able to ensure that the required levels of service were delivered to the public.

Consultation Documents

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the White and Green Papers and consultation documents published by his Department in the last five years.

Mr. Howard: The available information is as follows:

White Papers

Charities: a framework for the future/Great Britain. Home Office. —London: HMSO, 1989.—(Cm 694)

Compensating victims of violent crime: changes to the criminal injuries compensation scheme/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1993.—(Cm 2434)

Crime, justice and protecting the public/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1990.—(Cm 965)

Custody, care and justice: the way ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales/Woolf, Harry; Great Britain. Home Office. —London: HMSO, 1991.—(Cm 1647)

A National lottery: raising money for good causes/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1992.—(Cm 1861)

A New framework for local justice/Great Britain. Home Office; Great Britain. Lord Chancellor's Department.—London: HMSO, 1992.—(Cm 1829)

[Issued jointly by the Home Office and Lord Chancellor's Department]

Police reform: a police service for the twenty-first century/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1993.—(Cm 2281)

Supervision and punishment in the community: a framework for action/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1990.—(Cm 966)

Green Papers and other consultation documents

Absent voting/Great Britain. Home Office—[London]: Home Office, 1989.—(Representation of the People Acts consultation paper; no. 2).

The Asylum Appeals (Procedure) Rules 1992: consultation draft 1st November 1991/Great Britain, Home Office. Immigration and Nationality Department.—[Croydon: Home Office], 1991/Great Britain. Home Office. Immigration and Nationality Department. —[Croydon: Home Office], 1991

Candidates election expenses: consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—[London]: Home Office, 1989

Civil defence community volunteers: a discussion paper by the co-ordinator of voluntary effort/Emergency Planning College. —Easingwold: [Emergency Planning College], 1989.

A Code of standards for the Prison Service: a discussion document produced by the Code of Standards Steering Group/Dunbar, I M; Great Britain. Prison Service. Directorate of Inmate Administration. London: Home Office, 1992

The control of dogs: a consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1990

Control of fund-raising: a consultation document on part II of the Charities Act 1992/Great Britain. Voluntary Services Unit.—Home Office, Voluntary Services Unit, 1993

Court escorts, custody and security: a discussion paper/Great Britain. Home Office. Criminal Department.—London: Home Office, 1990

Criminal appeals and the establishment of a Criminal Cases Review Authority: a discussion paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—[London]: Home Office, 1994

Disclosure of criminal records for employment vetting purposes: a consultation paper by the Home Office/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1993.—(Cm 2319)

Draft magistrates' courts (Children Act 1989) rules 1991: consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—[London]: Home Office, 1991

Draft magistrates' courts (Children Act 1989) rules 1991: additional consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office. [London]: Home Office, 1991

Evening opening of licensed betting offices: Home Office consultation document/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1991

Fire safety management in hotels and boarding houses: draft for consultation/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1990

Misuse of witness statements in sexual offences cases: a consultation paper by the Home Office/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1991.

Partnership in dealing with offenders in the community: a discussion paper issued by the Home Office to complement the white paper 'Crime, Justice, and protecting the public'/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1990.

Possible reforms of the liquor licensing system in England and Wales: a consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.–London: Home Office, 1993.

The Prison disciplinary system: consultation document on L. J. Woolf's proposal that boards of visitors . . . /Great Britain Home Office. Inspectorate of Prisons.—London: Home Office, 1991.

Prison sanitation: proposals for the ending of slopping out/Great Britain. Inspectorate of Prisons—London: Home Office, 1989.

Proposed changes in the immigration rules: consultation document/Great Britain. Home Office, Immigration and Nationality Department.—London: [Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department], 1993.

Reforming the law on Sunday trading: a guide to the options for reform/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1993—(Cm. 2300)

The remand of alleged juvenile offenders: a consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office. Criminal Policy Department. —London: Home Office, 1991.

Review of Police discipline procedures: a consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—[London]: Home Office, 1993.

Squatting: a Home Office consultation paper/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1991.

Summer time: a consultation document/Great Britain. Home Office.—London: HMSO, 1989.—(Cm. 722).

Technology for the enforcement of road traffic law: [consultation paper]—Great Britain. Home Office.—London: Home Office, 1989.

Wheelclamping on private land: a consultation paper by the Home Office/Great Britain. Home Office.—[London]: Home Office, 1993.

No central record is maintained of consultation documents not published as Green papers. The above list may not therefore be comprehensive.

Legislation

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* private Members' Bills and *(b)* other public Bills have been passed within his sphere of responsibility in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is given in the table.

Private Members' and Public Bills, within the sphere of the Secretary of State for the Home Department's responsibility which have received Royal Assent since 1979

Parliamentary Session	*Public Bills*	*Private Members' and Private Peers' Bills*
1979-80	5	7
1980-81	4	6
1981-82	3	3

Parliamentary Session	Public Bills	Private Members' and Private Peers' Bills
1982-83	2	5
1983-84	5	5
1984-85	4	7
1985-86	3	4
1986-87	4	6
1987-88	4	4
1988-89	5	2
1989-90	3	4
1990-91	4	6
1991-92	3	3
1992-93	4	5
[1] 1993-94	1	0
Total	54	67

[1] To date.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many questions received *(a)* oral and *(b)* written answers from Home Office Ministers in each year since 1989.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is given in the table.

Oral and Written Answers given by Home Office Ministers in both Houses since the 1989-90 Session

Parliamentary Session	Commons Answers			Lords Answers		
	Priority Written[1]	Ordinary Written	Oral[2]	Written	Oral	Total
1989-90	1,456	1,455	704	157	37	3,809
1990-91	1,145	1,273	184	154	41	2,797
1991-92	700	700	106	70	22	1,598
1992-93	2,156	2,526	313	222	65	5,282
1993-94[3]	1,488	2,026	210	191	43	3,958

[1]Now known as Questions for a 'named day'.
[2]Not all reached during Question Time.
[3]Figures up to 19 July.

Firearms

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegally held semi-automatic firearms have been confiscated by the police service in England and Wales during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the provenance of firearms unlawfully imported into the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have no hard information. The break-up of the former Soviet Union and the demise of the Warsaw pact has led to a greater availability of firearms on the world market. Her Majesty's customs are aware of this increased risk and are taking steps to counter it.

Subject Access Requests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many subject access requests were received by each police force in the last year; what estimate he has as to the percentage of those requests which were enforced subject access requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The number of subject access requests received by police forces in England and Wales, from 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1994, are given in the table. Applicants do not give reasons for requesting the disclosure and so it is not possible to estimate the percentage of the total number of requests which arise out of enforced subject access. However, the Metropolitan police national identification bureau considers that enforced subject access requests represents a large majority of the cases that are dealt with.

Force	Requests
Avon and Somerset	262
Bedfordshire	106
Cambridgeshire	34
Cheshire	150
City of London	33
Cleveland	102
Cumbria	30
Derbyshire	133
Devon and Cornwall	191
Dorset	109
Durham	42
Dyfed-Powys	60
Essex	243
Gloucestershire	34
Greater Manchester	372
Gwent	67
Hampshire	227
Hertfordshire	171
Humberside	551
Kent	547
Lancashire	170
Leicestershire	84
Lincolnshire	86
Merseyside	173
Metropolitan	3,821
Norfolk	98
North Wales	80
North Yorkshire	137
Northamptonshire	165
Northumbria	257
Nottinghamshire	237
South Wales	480
South Yorkshire	605
Staffordshire	807
Suffolk	111
Surrey	226
Sussex	253
Thames Valley	260
Warwickshire	48

Force	Requests
West Mercia	87
West Midlands	414
West Yorkshire	459
Wiltshire	59
Total	12,581

Immigration

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the research projects on immigration and resettlement policy commissioned by his Department of which the results and final reports for which his Department has not published in part or in full in 1994; and if he will set out the reasons for the decisions not to publish.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *34-35*.

Current projects on immigration and settlement policy are:

Manpower allocation planning for the immigration control.
Study of factors which affect the decision to seek British citizenship.
The experiences of settlement among refugees with special reference to housing and employment.
The experiences of settlement among Vietnamese refugees.

Reports on these projects have not been finalised; but when they have been, they will be published.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many different individuals have been detained under Immigration Acts powers during the recent 12-month period; and of these how many were *(a)* asylum seekers and *(b)* others.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the prisons and *(b)* the police stations used to detain people under Immigration Acts powers; and if he will give the numbers so detained for the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean: All prisons and police cells are designated places of detention for the purpose of detention under the Immigration Act 1971.

Details are given in the following table of people detained on 19 July 1994 in Prison Service establishments. Similar details are not available for police cells and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration detainees held in

(i) Prison	Numbers
Aberdeen	2
Armley	2
Bedford	1
Belfast	2
Belmarsh	8
Blakenhurst	4
Bristol	1
Brinsford	9
Brixton	3
Bullingdon	30
Cardiff	1
Chelmsford	3
Cookham Wood	1
Dorchester	3
Durham	1
Edinburgh	1
Elmley	3
Erlestoke	1
Exeter	2
Feltham	2
Gloucester	1
Greenock	7
Haslar	24
Highdown	14
Holloway	5
Hull	5
Lewes	2
Liverpool	3
Manchester	13
Norwich	2
Pentonville	4
Reading	1
Rochester	28
Shrewsbury	2
Swaleside	1
Swansea	1
Wandsworth	9
Winchester	4
Winson Green	38
The Wolds	2
Wormwood Scrubs	2
Total	248
(ii) Police Cells	12

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *659*, if he will set out the reasons why the information requested on prosecutions pressed for vehicle exhaust emissions is not available centrally; and if he will make it his policy to establish arrangements for the central collection of such data.

Mr. Maclean: The information which is collected on court proceedings for summary motoring offences uses a classification system which does not currently distinguish exhaust emission offences from other offences of vehicles in defective condition. It would be possible to provide the information requested only by approaching individual courts, and this would be disproportionately expensive. Decisions on exactly which information is collected on summary motoring court proceedings, of which there were about 2·5 million in 1992, take into account the need to provide statistics of most interest to Ministers, Members of Parliament and others, the need for the data collection to be cost-effective and the need to reduce the total burden of information gathering on the police, who currently have to provide this information. In any future review of the classification scheme used, account will be taken of all representations which have been made.

Fire Services

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the need to provide adequate coverage against fires in determining the future of fire stations serving Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend would not be prepared to approve proposals by the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority for the closure of any fire station in Merseyside unless he was satisfied, on the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, that the authority would continue to maintain the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover.

Prisoners (Psychiatric Treatment)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give a breakdown of the referrals for psychiatric treatment of prisoners broken down by category for each year since 1984.

(2) how many referrals for prisoners were for the treatment of psychiatric disorders for each year since 1984.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about referrals for psychiatric treatment, broken down by category for each year since 1984.

This information is not available in the form requested. However, the table below gives the number of prisoners seen by NHS consultant psychiatrists and those transferred under Sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to outside psychiatric facilities for treatment, for 1986 onwards.

Year	*Number of prisoners referred to NHS psychiatrists*	*Number of prisoners transferred under (Section 47 and 48 of the MHA 1983)*
1986-87	9,975	159
1987-88	9,410	183
1988-89	13,745	184
1989-90	12,670	220
1990-91	13,396	323
1991-92	17,583	379
1992-93	16,737	625

The study of psychiatric disorder in sentenced prisoners carried out by Professor Gunn et al from the Institute of Psychiatry in 1990 gave an estimated prevalence of psychiatric disorder by diagnostic group as follows:

Diagnoses	*Per cent.*
Psychosis	1·9
Neurotic disorder	5·3
Personality disorder	8·2
Sexual deviation	1·9
Organic disorder	0·9

It is likely that referrals and transfers shown would follow the same prevalence of diagnosis.

Prisoners (Medical Treatment)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many prisoners were treated by the private medical sector for each year since 1984.

Mr Maclean: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners treated by the private medical sector for each year since 1984.

I regret that this information is not collected centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were treated by NHS hospital trusts for each year since 1984.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Ian McCartney, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners treated by NHS hospital trusts for each year since 1984.

The information you request is only available from 1986 onwards and is set out in the table. The status of NHS hospitals, trust or otherwise, is not recorded.

Year	*Number of occasions which prisoners attended NHS out-patient departments*	*Number of transfers to NHS hospitals for in-patient treatment or observation*
1986-87	17,757	1,908
1987-88	18,006	1,964
1988-89	18,494	1,964
1989-90	18,740	1,988
1990-91	18,402	1,887
1991-92	24,420	2,230
1992-93	23,959	2,240

Identity Cards

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the officials and organisations involved in his review of whether a national identity card should be introduced; when this review is to be concluded; and if he will place briefing papers in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: The question of a national identity card scheme is kept under review. If it were decided to pursue the idea there would be a full consultation exercise.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the implications of the existence of identity cards elsewhere in the EC for the United Kingdom; and if identity cards are subject to subsidiarity rules.

Mr. Maclean: There is an obligation under Community law to recognise national identity cards of other member states which are issued for travel purposes. The concept of subsidiarity applies to proposals for Community legislation. There are no such proposals in respect of identity cards.

Road Death Victims

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his response to each of the specific recommendations set out in chapter 5 of the report, "Support for the Families of Road Death Victims", published by an independent working party on 18 July;

(2) what is his general response to the recommendations set out in chapter 5 of the report, "Support for the Families

of Road Death Victims," published by an independent working party on 18 July, a copy of which has been sent to him;

(3) what action he proposes to take on each of the specific recommendations set out in chapter 5 of the report, "Support for the Families of Road Death Victims", published by an independent working party on 18 July, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Maclean: It is too soon to announce any response to the report, "Support for the Families of Road Death Victims", which was only published on 18 July. Chapter 5 of the report makes a number of recommendations aimed at several Government Departments and other bodies, which will need to be carefully considered by those concerned.

Prison Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Tooting on 1 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *623,* listing the bonus of the Director General of the Prison Service, for the period of 6 January to 31 March 1993, if he is now in a position to indicate the bonuses paid to the Director General of the Prison Service for the whole of 1993.

Mr. Howard:; The Director General of the Prison Service received a performance bonus of £35,000 for the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994.

Geneva Convention

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations the British Government have undertaken into the conduct of individuals suspected of committing, between 1964 and 1989, offences under the Geneva Convention Act 1957 relating to article 147 of the Geneva convention directive to the protection of civilians in time of war.

Mr. Maclean: Any such investigations would be carried out by the police. They have no central record of the number, if any, of investigations carried out.

Police Functions

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations were consulted on the issues covered by the Home Office review of core police functions.

Mr. Maclean: The organisations consulted on the review of police core and ancillary tasks are the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Superintendents Association, the Police Federation, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the nature, length of time and extent of the consultation exercise that he intends to carry out in response to the recommendations of the Home Office review of core police functions.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to receive a report on the review of police core and ancillary tasks at the turn of the year. Consultation is currently under way with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Superintendents Association, the Police Federation, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend will decide on the appropriate level and type of wider consultation in the light of the recommendations made by the review.

Paul Malone

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department will make known to Paul Malone its decision following the report from the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Maclean: Once the inquiries into Mr. Malone's case are completed my right hon. and learned Friend will decide as quickly as possible whether there are grounds for action on his part in relation to the representations about the safety of his conviction. Mr. Malone will then be informed of his decision.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Metropolitan police investigation into the case of Paul Malone, H26911, commissioned by the Police Complaints Authority was concluded.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the authority received a report from the investigating officer on 8 June in the light of which it has asked for further information to be provided on certain points.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Police Complaints Authority will complete its examination of the report of the Metropolitan police into the case of Paul Malone.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the authority expects shortly to be in a position to issue the appropriate interim statement as to its satisfaction with the conduct of the investigation in this case.

Bouncers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the regulation of the functions and duties of bouncers at licensed premises and clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Since the beginning of this year, the Home Office has received three letters on the subject. I have also had a meeting and related correspondence with the British Entertainment and Discotheque Association and the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the total numbers of asylum seekers under the age of 18 years held in detention at the latest available date; and what was the figure 12 months ago.

Mr. Maclean: On 19 July, there were six people under the age of 18 years who had at some stage sought asylum, and who were detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

The corresponding figure for 12 months ago is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Carol Birch

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations were made to his Department by the court in Parma, Majorca regarding the appearance of a defence witness Carol Birch to testify on behalf of Mr. Russell Torr of Doncaster road, Carlton in Lidnick, Worksop, Nottingham; and what responses they made;

(2) if his Department had access to the name, address and passport number of Carol Birch and a copy of the statement she made to the court in Palma, Majorca; if this statement was made available to the trial of Russell Torr and what was the reason for the decision; and if he will make a statement regarding what efforts were made to contact Carol Birch as requested by the court in Palma.

Mr. Maclean: On 7 December 1993, the Home Office received from the Provincial Tribunal, Palma de Mallorca, a summons to be served on Ms Carol Birch calling for her appearance before the tribunal for the purposes of proceedings concerning Mr. Russell Torr. The tribunal provided a passport number, but not a full address. Article 14 of the European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters, to which the United Kingdom and Spain are parties, provides, in the case of a summons, that the issuing authority shall provide the address of the person to be served. In these circumstances, the tribunal was advised on 17 December 1993 that the summons had not been served because the address provided was not sufficient. The tribunal was advised of this again on 12 January 1994. The Home Office has no knowledge in this case of a statement made by Ms Birch.

South Wales Police (Fraud Cases)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with the chief constable of South Wales police concerning the inability to take on fraud cases pending the re-provisioning of the travel and miscellaneous expenses budget of the fraud squad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The chief constable has assured me that all fraud complaints will continue to be investigated.

Merseyside Police

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many man-hours annually the Merseyside police expend in the execution of warrants issued to Merseyside and North-Western Electricity Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Coroners Courts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of occasions since 1985 when there have been judicial reviews, or other proceedings in court, concerning the verdicts of, or proceedings in, coroners courts; and if he will deposit any record of each in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: Information in the precise form sought by the hon. Member is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member with the available information in due course.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Howard: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994, Ministers in my Department made six overseas visits in their official capacity. None of these involved fund-raising activities for the Conservative party.

Car Thefts

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many car thieves were apprehended during 1993-94 as a result of the tracker system;

(2) what estimate the Government have made of the impact of tracker systems on the number of cars stolen each year;

(3) how many stolen cars were recovered in 1993-94; and how many installed with the tracker system were recovered during the same period.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of arrests attributable to the tracker system is not collected centrally.

The Home Office has made no assessment of the impact of vehicle-tracking systems, of which tracker is but one, on the number of cars stolen. This will be a matter for the police service. I understand that it is still too early to make any such assessment.

The provisional figure for stolen vehicles recovered in England and Wales, excluding Dyfed-Powys, in calendar year 1993 is 350,862. I understand that, from September 1993, when the tracker system began operations, to the end of March 1994, 24 stolen vehicles fitted with tracker equipment were recovered.

Fires

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults were (i) injured or (ii) killed in fires in 1993 in houses in multiple occupation; and what proportion the fatality figure of the total domestic fatalities was caused by fire.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not available for 1993. For 1992, the age of fatal and non-fatal casualties from fires attended by local authority fire brigades in houses in multiple occupancies is published in table 23 of the Home Office publication, "Fire Statistics, United Kingdom 1992". Information on deaths from accidents occurring in the home and communal establishments, by cause, is published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in table 3 of "Mortality Statistics 1992, Injury and Poisoning: England and Wales", series DH4 No. 18. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that the victims of violent crime will be given the right to appeal against decisions made under the reformed criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Applicants who are dissatisfied with the initial decision of the criminal injuries compensation authority have an unfettered right of appeal. The arrangements for considering appeals are described in paragraphs 32-37 of the White Paper "Compensating Victims of Violent Crime: Changes to the Criminal Injuries Compensating Scheme", Cm. 2434.

Under these arrangements a dissatisfied applicant may request reconsideration of his case by the authority. This will be an internal review of the case conducted by a more senior member of the authority and may result in the original decision being confirmed, overturned or otherwise altered.

An applicant who remains dissatisfied after this review may appeal to an appeals panel. The panel, which is independent of the authority and Ministers, will be able to deal with the appeal on the papers or by offering the appellant an oral hearing at which he may present his case.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had regarding his plans to reform the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Since we announced our intention in November 1992 to introduce a revised criminal injuries compensation scheme we have received representations from a number of hon. Members, either in writing on their own behalf or on behalf of constituents, as well as from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, various organisations including representative bodies of the legal profession, victim support local schemes and the national office, the Trade Union Congress, the Police Federation and members of the public.

The representations have covered a range from the underlying principles and rationale of the new scheme to questions about how it will be administered.

The new arrangements came into effect on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to provide adequate assessments of post-traumatic stress and sexual abuse for victims of violent crime under the reformed criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority which administers the new scheme is responsible, like the board which preceded it, for ensuring that sufficient medical evidence is obtained to enable the applicant's injuries and their after-effects to be correctly assessed.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the recent report by the Animal Procedures Committee on regulatory toxicology and the recommendations it contains;

(2) which of those recommendations made in the report of the Animal Procedures Committee on regulatory toxicology he intends to incorporate into Home Office policy.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 19 July, *Official Report*, column *153*.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the types and numbers of cosmetics tests carried out on animals in 1992; and if he will give a further breakdown of these figures indicating which tests involved raw ingredients and which involved finished products.

Mr. Maclean: A special exercise undertaken by the Home Office at the request of the Animal Procedures Committee showed that 2,227 animals were used in cosmetics tests during 1992, a fall of nearly 40 per cent. on the previous year's figure. Of the animals used during 1992, 1,826 were involved in tests on ingredients; the remaining 401 involved various tests on a single finished product.

I understand that a more detailed breakdown of the types and numbers of cosmetics tests carried out during 1993 will appear in the forthcoming annual report of the Animal Procedures Committee. I have asked for a similar analysis to be undertaken in respect of 1992, and I shall write to the hon. Member with the results.

Drugs Prevention

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the drugs prevention initiative in Liverpool; and what were his findings.

Mr. Howard: I visited the Home Office drugs prevention initiative team at its offices in Liverpool on 17 June. In addition to meeting the team members, I met representatives of the city council, the health authority and people from some of the local projects that the team is supporting.

I was impressed with the work which the local team were doing to help the local community fight the drug problem. I hope that it will be possible for me to see more of the projects with which they are involved in a future visit.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison inmates were found to be HIV positive in each prison; and what counselling is taking place in respect of HIV-positive prisoners.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Roland Boyes, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners found to be HIV positive in each prison and what counselling is provided for prisoners in respect of HIV.

At 30 June 1994 there were 45 prisoners confirmed to have HIV in the prisons of England and Wales. To protect the medical confidentiality of the prisoners, there locations are not disclosed.

There are 207 centrally trained HIV counsellors throughout the prison establishments of England and Wales. Pre and post counselling is offered to all prisoners who are considering having an HIV antibody test, either through prison health care centres or genito-urinary medicine clinics operating within prison establishments.

Prison Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table giving the numbers of *(a)* category A prisoners, *(b)* category B

prisoners, *(c)* category C prisoners, *(d)* category D prisoners, *(e)* sentenced adult males awaiting categorisation, *(f)* young offenders categorised as suitable for open conditions, *(g)* young offenders categorised as suitable for closed conditions, *(h)* women prisoners categorised as suitable for open conditions, *(i)* women prisoners categorised as suitable for closed conditions and *(j)* remand prisoners in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of prisoners by category.

On 18 July, 690 category A prisoners were held in Prison Service establishments.

Provisional information for 30 June indicates that the number of category B, category C, and category D prisoners were respectively 6,050, 15,880 and 6,150.

On 31 May, 12,530 remand prisoners were held, including 96 in police cells.

No information is available centrally on the number of sentenced males awaiting categorisation or the number of young offenders or women categorised as suitable for either open or closed conditions.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of prisoners received into prison in England and Wales in 1993 who were remand prisoners.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number and percentage of prisoners received into prisons in England and Wales in 1993 who were remand prisoners.

The statistics of receptions of different categories of prisoner involves the repeat counting of a single prisoner received successively as untried, convicted unsentenced and sentenced.

In 1993, approximately 53,000 untried persons and 30,200 convicted unsentenced persons, some previously received as untried, were received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

There were about 74,700 receptions of sentenced prisoners, some previously received as untried or convicted unsentenced or both, and approximately 4,600 non-criminal receptions.

The total of the untried and convicted unsentenced receptions represents 51 per cent. of all receptions.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown of all prisoners in England and Wales by offence group, at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a breakdown of the prison population by offence group at the latest available date.

The attached table gives the available provisional information for sentenced prisoners held in Prison Service establishments on 31 May.

Population in Prison Service establishments under sentence at 31 May 1994 by offence group—England and Wales

Offence group	*Number of persons*
Offences with immediate custodial sentence	
Violence against the person	7,720
Sexual offences	3,260
Burglary	5,010
Robbery	5,010
Theft and handling	3,190
Fraud and Forgery	880
Drugs offences	3,370
Other offences	3,750
Offences not recorded	2,850
All offences	35,050
In default of a fine	440
All sentenced prisoners	35,490

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners were received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of male and female prisoners received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last ten years.

Information on the number of receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for the years 1983 to 1992 is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 1.14 of the 1992 edition, Cm. 2581). A copy of this publication is available in the Library of the House.

The attached table shows provisional information for 1993.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in 1993[1]

	Male	*Female*
Untried	51,120	2,670
Convicted, Unsentenced[2]	28,730	1,520
Sentenced[2] [3]	71,010	3,730
Non-criminal	4,370	250

[1]Provisional figures.
[2]Includes some prisoners previously received as untried or convicted unsentenced.
[3]Includes fine defaulters.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners were received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many remand prisoners were received into prisons in England and Wales in each of the last ten years.

Information on the number of receptions into Prison Service establishments for the years 1983 to 1992 is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 1.14 of the 1992 edition, Cm 2581), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Provisional information for 1993 shows that 53,800 prisoners were received into Prison Service establishments as untried and 30,200 as convicted unsentenced during 1993. The convicted unsentenced figure will include some prisoners previously received as untried.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the remand population in England and Wales on the last day of each of the last 36 months; and what percentage of the prison population remands formed on each occasion.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the remand population in England and Wales on the last day of each of the last 36 months; and what was the percentage of the prison population remands formed on each occasion.

This information is given in the following table.

Population of remand prisoners, in England and Wales, May 1991 to May 1994[1]

Date	*Remand population*	*Percentage of total population in custody*
1994		
May	12,530	26
April	12,158	25
March	11,885	24
February	12,109	25
January	12,109	26
1993		
December	10,763	24
November	11,895	25
October	11,829	25
September	11,445	25
August	11,407	25
July	10,572	24
June	10,632	24
May	10,181	24
April	9,997	23
March	9,996	23
February	9,933	23
January	9,433	23
1992		
December	8,490	21
November	9,459	22
October	9,605	22
September	10,020	22
August	10,128	22
July	9,942	21
June	10,404	22
May	10,294	22
April	10,646	22
March	10,678	22
February	10,747	23
January	10,661	23
1991		
December	9,881	22
November	10,654	22
October	10,797	23
September	10,754	23
August	10,357	22
July	10,039	22
June	9,877	22
May	10,015	22

[1]Includes prisoners held in police cells.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by *(a)* age, *(b)* offence group, *(c)* gender and *(d)* ethnic group of all receptions into prisons in England and Wales in 1993.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a breakdown by *(a)* ages, *(b)* offence group, *(c)* gender and *(d)* ethnic group of all receptions into prisons in England and Wales in 1993.

A breakdown by age and sex of receptions of untried and sentenced prisoners in 1993 is given in Table 5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 16/94 'The Prison Population in 1993 and Long Term Projections to 2001', a copy of which is in the library of the House.

The readily available breakdown of receptions by ethnic group was given in the table for 1993 attached to my reply to your recent Question about a breakdown by ethnic origin for each of the last ten years.

The breakdown by type of offence for sentenced receptions in 1993 is given in the attached table.

Receptions into prison service establishments 1993: by type of offence

Type of Offence	*Number*
All Offences	52,100
Violence Against the Person	7,540
Sexual Offences	1,900
Burglary	9,550
Robbery	3,160
Theft & Handling	9,100
Frauds & Forgery	1,790
Drug Offences	3,180
Other Offences	12,230
Offences Not Recorded	3,640

Note:
Excludes any prisoners held solely in police cells.
Excludes fine defaulters.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female foreign nationals in prison had been convicted of drug offences at the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 21 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number and percentage of male and female foreign nationals in prison who had been convicted of drug offences at the latest available date.

On 31 May 1994 in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales 634 sentenced male non-British citizens, excluding fine defaulters, were recorded centrally as being under sentence for drugs offences, or thirty per cent. of sentenced male non-British citizens.

The equivalent figures for females are 143 and 67 per cent.

Correspondence

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford will receive a reply to her letters of 3 February, 12 April and 31 May concerning Mr. and Mrs. Kwabena Aidoobofour.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he expects to reply to the letter dated 16 March sent to his Department by the hon. Member for Aylesbury on behalf of his constituent Mr. WJO.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) replied on 20 July.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she holds on surveys by ADAS in the past two years on agricultural land in the Staveley area; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My Department has commissioned no such work from ADAS in the area in question since 1 July 1992.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance indicators are used to assess the effect of environmentally sensitive area management; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: For each environmentally sensitive area there are performance indicators related to the specific objectives of the scheme. Booklets summarising these objectives and performance indicators have been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

A programme for monitoring the environmental impact of the scheme is in place and will enable us to judge progress towards achievement of the objectives and associated performance indicators. Reports on the results of the monitoring will be published preparatory to the proposed five-yearly reviews of each ESA.

Set-aside

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many holdings in each county in England had entered into the five-year set-aside scheme in the year 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: The table gives the total number of holdings which had entered into an agreement under the scheme in each county up to 1992 when the scheme closed. These figures do not take account of subsequent withdrawals or transfers of ownership. Information on these could be included only at disproportionate cost.

Five Year set-aside scheme: number of holdings by county

	Number of holdings
Avon	56
Bedfordshire	86
Berkshire	64
Buckinghamshire	161
Cambridgeshire	138
Cheshire	41
Cleveland	9
Cornwall	136
Cumbria	12
Derbyshire	43
Devon	78
Dorset	60
Durham	29
Essex	179
Gloucestershire	139
Greater London	19
Greater Manchester	9
Hampshire	110
Hereford and Worcestershire	78
Hertfordshire	77
Humberside	72
Isle of Wight	10
Kent	172
Lancashire	16
Leicestershire	56
Lincolnshire	104
Merseyside	14
West Midlands	6
Norfolk	155
Northamptonshire	119
Northumberland	45
Nottinghamshire	42
Oxfordshire	172
Shropshire	36
Somerset	62
Staffordshire	47
Suffolk	228
Surrey	60
East Sussex	105
West Sussex	94
Tyne and Wear	18
Warwickshire	87
Wiltshire	114
North Yorkshire	114
South Yorkshire	20
West Yorkshire	15
England	3,507

Central Veterinary Laboratory

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the annual report and accounts for the Central Veterinary Laboratory are due to be published.

Mr. Jack: The Central Veterinary Laboratory's annual report and accounts was published on 21 July 1994. Copies are available in the House Library. The report demonstrates the continuing progress and success of the laboratory as a next steps agency and I would like to congratulate the chief executive and his staff on their considerable achievements during the year.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 18 and 19 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State represented the United Kingdom at this Council whose principal outcome was agreement on the agricultural prices for 1994-95 and the associated proposals on milk quotas.

The package of measures agreed met all the United Kingdom's main objectives, including significantly reining back agricultural expenditure in 1995. Among our specific objectives which were met were: the rejection of the Commission's proposal to reduce milk quotas by 1 per cent. in 1994-95 and confirmation that there would be no quota cut in 1995-96; a reduction in butter prices for 1994-95 of 3 per cent. provision to allow the United Kingdom to allocate, across the board, the 70,000 tonnes of milk quota remaining from last year's 0·6 per cent. increase; confirmation that export refunds on whisky, to offset the higher price of Community grain, will continue, worth about £20 million per annum to the United Kingdom industry; rejection of the proposed cut in linseed aid which would have diverted producers into alternative crops such as rapeseed and flax with potentially increased budgetary costs—in the event, the Council increased this aid from 85 to 87 ecu/tonne; and measures to contain expenditure, especially on beef where the regional ceilings for beef special premium for several member states, though not the United Kingdom, were substantially reduced.

Only when all my concerns on milk had been met was my right hon. Friend prepared to accept confirmation of the milk quota increases agreed last year for Italy, Spain and Greece. These will apply for 1994-95 only, for Italy and Greece, and definitively for Spain.

The Council also agreed, at my insistence, measures to simplify the sheep annual premium scheme, so as to make it easier for members of producer groups to claim premium. This is an important deregulatory measure. It also agreed to put in place a short-term apple orchard grubbing scheme.

The overall package will lead to substantial savings for the 1995 EC budget and ensure that the agricultural guideline can be respected. This excludes expenditure in 1995 resulting from the application of the agrimonetary system since September 1992. My right hon. Friend made it clear that the United Kingdom would not agree to any breach or increase of the guideline and that further proposals for savings would be required if it appeared that total expenditure could not be contained within the guideline.

The main elements of the price proposals were agreed unanimously although Denmark opposed the beef aspects. The milk quota proposals were agreed by qualified majority, the Benelux countries and Denmark voting against. The United Kingdom supported the whole package which, overall, represents a very good deal for United Kingdom farmers, taxpayers and consumers.

On bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the German Minister announced that that country's proposed unilateral measures would not be brought into effect. This followed a number of changes to the rules agreed in the Standing Veterinary Committee which met simultaneously with the Council. This will remove uncertainty from our beef industry, confirming as it does that all member states now accept that British beef is safe. Their decision wholly vindicates the Government's insistence that our policy on this issue must be based firmly and solely on science.

Finally, the Council agreed to consider ways of simplifying the common agricultural policy in order to reduce the regulation and red tape imposed on farmers. We circulated a paper listing several areas where our farmers have experienced problems. This will be considered alongside suggestions from other member states.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Political Advisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to strengthen the guidelines in relation to the job descriptions of political advisers in relation to their contacts with political parties and their activists.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Political special advisers are bound generally by the rules on political activity applicable to other civil servants, with specific exemptions. They may, with the approval of their Minister, attend party functions and maintain contact with party members; and take part in policy reviews conducted by their party. In addition, and also subject to approval by their Minister, special advisers are allowed to involve themselves in local politics. I have no plans to change these arrangements.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department plays a full role in the Government's policies to assist the development of small business in the United Kingdom. Work carried out by this Department over the last 12 months to assist small businesses includes:

implementing the measures set out in the White Paper on science, engineering and technology, notably the technology foresight programme which encourages the participation of all kinds of business, and the restructuring of the research councils, which has made them more responsive to the needs of the business community generally;

encouraging greater participation of small business in EC research and development programmes, for example through CRAFT scheme which facilitates their involvement in the industrial technologies programme;

encouraging Government Departments and agencies to assist business, including small firms, through citizens charter initiatives such as the revised employer's charter produced by the Contributions Agency, and the Charter Standard statement and code of practice produced by Companies House;

continuing to work closely with the DTI's deregulation unit on the implementation of "Working With Business", the code of good practice for enforcement agencies;

overseeing the competing for quality programme across central Government. This includes market testing and/or contracting-out many activities employing between one and 20 people before tendering, thus offering opportunities for small firms to bid for contracts.

Performance Targets

Mr. Trend: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what key performance targets he has set for Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the current year.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The key performance targets for Her Majesty's Stationery Office for 1994 are:

(i) to achieve a current cost operating profit of £11·9 million before exceptional items;

(ii) for print, to achieve 96 per cent. of all orders delivered to time, and 95 per cent. of all orders from the print storage and distribution warehouse to be delivered on time;

(iii) for the publications centre to achieve dispatch times for customers' mail, EDI and telephone orders of 85 per cent. within four working days of receipt and 96 per cent. within five working days;

(iv) for business supplies to dispatch 99 per cent. of validated orders for stock catalogue items within two working days of receipt and for 96 per cent. of items to be dispatched first time from stock.

Civil Servants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which permanent secretaries of Departments are not career civil servants: whether he will publish in the *Official Report* full details of their career outside and inside Whitehall; and which of them have been engaged in political activities denied to First Division civil servants in their earlier capacities.

Mr. David Hunt: The following were recruited to the Civil Service at permanent secretary or second permanent secretary level.

A. P. Budd—HM Treasury
Sir T. Burns—HM Treasury
Professor K. C. Calman—Department of Health
Professor D. E. N. Davies—Ministry of Defence
R. A. Langlands—Department of Health
Dr. M. K. McIntosh—Ministry of Defence
W. P. McLennan—Central Statistical Office
Mrs. B. J. L. Mills—Director of Public Prosecutions

Their careers and experience vary widely and are described in *"Who's Who!"* Before appointment inquiries are made to ensure that there are no obstacles to the recruitment of candidates to a non-political civil service. After appointment, they are expected to comply with the restrictions on political activities set out in the civil service management code and departmental staff handbooks.

Efficiency Unit Scrutiny

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what topics have been covered in the Efficiency Unit's central scrutiny programme in the last financial year; and which scrutiny reports can be made available to the general public.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Fifteen efficiency scrutinies or similar reviews have been undertaken by Departments in 1993-94 in association with the Prime Minister's adviser on effieicncy and the efficiency unit. The programme, including those which are not yet completed, is as follows:

Department/Title of scrutiny	*Report: publicly available*
Completed	
Central Statistical Office	
Structure and conduct of statistical inquiries to business	Yes
Department of Employment	
Management and administration of employment services adjudication	No
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	
Research and analysis department and library and records department	No
Security of information	No
Home Office	
Inter-agency co-operation on illegal immigration	No
Inland revenue	
Managing contracts	Yes
Department of Naational Savings	
Scope for expanding facilities for investments in national savings (Executive summary and summary of recommendations available on request)	No
Northern Ireland Office	
Management and disposal of Government-owned land	Under consideration
Scottish Office	
Management and control of non-departmental public bodies	Under consideration
Welsh Office	
The sponsorship of non-departmental public bodies (action plan recommendations available on request)	No
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	
Internal charging	Yes
Not completed	
Department of the Environment	
Liason officer functions	
Multi-departmental Scrutinies	
Management of the Government's civil estate	Yes
Public sector research establishments	Yes
The Government's use of external consultants	To be published shortly

Decisions on the publication of scrutiny reports are taken by the Ministers responsible for the scrutinies concerned. In a number of cases, where a scrutiny has been recently completed or is not yet complete, no decision on publication has been made.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's policy on sexual harassment.

Mr. David Hunt: It is civil service-wide policy that Departments and agencies should provide, for all their staff, a working environment which is free from harassment and unfair discrimination. Departments and agencies should have in place procedures for handling complaints of harassment and unfair discrimination and make them known to all staff.

Advice to Departments and agencies has recently been reviewed and published by my Department. I have arranged for the hon. Member to receive a copy of "Good Practice for Equal Opportunities Staff Complaints Procedures: Advice for Departments and Agencies", copies of which are also being placed in the Libraries of the House.

Ministerial Conduct (Complaints)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many complaints have been received from First Division Association civil servants since 1 January regarding the conduct of any Minister.

Mr. David Hunt: Contrary to the report in *The Independent on Sunday* of 17 July, no formal complaints have been made by the First Division Association about the conduct of a Minister.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which foreign troops are now operating, or are promised for deployment in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: As of 30 June the following countries had troops operating in Rwanda: Bangladesh, Canada, Ghana, France and Senegal. The following countries had military observers in place: Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Congo, Egypt, Fiji, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Poland, Russian Federation, Senegal, Togo, Uruguay and Zimbabwe. Mali and Togo also had civilian police in Rwanda. We understand that Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia have all offered additional troops.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is known about the whereabouts of Rwanda's former Government ministers; and what action is to be taken by the United Nations to locate them.

Mr. Baldry: We are not aware of the exact whereabouts of Rwanda's former Government Ministers. UNAMIR's mandate is to assist the humanitarian effort in Rwanda and help promote a political settlement.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by the United Nations, European Union and the United Kingdom to the Government of Zaire about the support it gives to UNITA in Angola; and what has been the response of the Government of Zaire.

Mr. Baldry: The chairman of the United Nations Angola sanctions committee has written to the Government of Zaire asking for a response to allegations that Zaire has breached United Nations sanctions against UNITA. The Government have not replied. We have therefore supported a proposal that the President of the Security Council call in the permanent representative of Zaire to explain his Government's lack of co-operation and to urge an immediate response to the allegations.

Nigeria

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) on 13 July at column 977.

Burundi

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the conduct of the Parti Pour la Liberation du Peuple Hutu in Burundi in the run-up to the presidential elections on 12 July; what representations he has received on the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have received no representations on the conduct of the Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu in Burundi. The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative is in Burundi to assist the Government and the Organisation of African Unity in their efforts to restore democratic institutions, rebuild confidence and stabilise the situation. With the consent of all concerned, the presidential election has been postponed and is now to take place before 12 October.

Giles Chichester and Michael Rogers

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *674*, what contact Mr. Giles Chichester and Mr. Michael Rogers had with the United Nations mission in Geneva on 24 July 1993; and what information the United Kingdom mission had of their activities regarding SASEA and the issue of bonds by Warburgs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since the answer of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to an earlier question on 17 June at columnn *674*, the consulate-general in Geneva has confirmed that Mr. Michael Rogers telephoned the vice-consul on 26 July 1993 seeking advice on how he might arrange a private visit for Mr. Giles Chichester to the United Nations in Geneva.

As is usual, the consulate-general was happy to assist. An exchange of faxes with the United Nations visits section set up the visit for 31 July 1993. Apart from a faxed message of thanks from Mr. Rogers after the visit had taken place, there has been no further contact with the consulate-general or any other United Kingdom office in Geneva on this matter.

Because of its private nature, we have no record of the substance of the visit by Mr. Chichester to the United Nations offices in Geneva in July 1993.

Furthermore, we have no knowledge of the activities of Messrs. Chichester and Rogers regarding SASEA and the issue of bonds by Warburgs.

United Nations Operations

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those United Nations operations to which British forces have been committed since 1964.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: United Kingdom forces have been committed to the following United Nations operations since 1964:

UN advance mission in Cambodia, 1991-92;
UN transitional authority in Cambodia, 1992-93;
UN transitional assistance group, Namibia, 1989-90;
UN mission for the referendum in western Sahara, 1991-93;
UN Iraq/Kuwait Observer Mission, 1991 to date;
UN force in Cyprus, 1964 to date;
UN protection force, former Yugoslavia, 1992 to date.

Figures refer to the years when United Kingdom forces were involved in the operations listed.

Hong Kong (Detention Centres)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with the Governor of Hong Kong prior to the raid by police and security forces on the Whitehead Vietnamese detention centre in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The transfer of Vietnamese migrants between detention centres is a matter for the Hong Kong Government. We had no discussions with the Governor of Hong Kong prior to the operation in the Whitehead detention centre on 7 April.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recommendations are to be introduced by the Governor of Hong Kong in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London as to the procedures that would be followed in any future disturbance at detention centres housing Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Baldry: The Hong Kong Government accept the recommendations contained in the report of the honourable Andrew Li, CBE, QC, JP and Professor Todd, CBE, JP and intend to implement them fully.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place *(a)* in London or *(b)* in Hong Kong as to the role played by Mr. Alistair Asprey, following the report on the handling of the incidents that took place at the Whitehead detention centre for Vietnamese people in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The role played by Mr. Alistair Asprey in the operation which took place in the Whitehead detention centre in Hong Kong on 7 April is set out in the report of the independent inquiry into that operation. The part that he played has not been discussed by the British or Hong Kong Government following publication of the report.

East Timor

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of disturbances and possible abuses of human rights in East Timor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 19 July at col. *133*.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Indonesia concerning the police attack on the university of East Timor on 28 June and later incidents; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards human rights in East Timor.

Mr. Baldry: The facts surrounding the recent events at the University of East Timor remain unclear. We have asked Her Majesty's embassy in Jakarta for a detailed report.

The Indonesian Government are well aware of the importance we attach to respect for human rights. With European Union partners, we expressed concern about reports of renewed clashes between the security forces and civilian demonstrators in a statement on 18 July.

Cyprus

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the decision by the European Court on exports from the Turkish-occupied sector of Cyprus to the European Union; how this is to be implemented; and what will be the main goods affected.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In its judgment on 5 July, the European Court held that, under the Plant Health Directive and the EC/Cyprus association agreement, member states were precluded from accepting phytosanitary and origin certificates other than those issued by the Republic of Cyprus authorities. The United Kingdom has amended its practice to give effect to the ruling.

Most agricultural goods will be affected because they require phytosanitary certificates, and all goods will lose preferential access under the EC/Cyprus association agreement. The principal non-agricultural products affected are textiles.

Korean Peninsula

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation of the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We hope that, following the death of Kim Il-sung, North Korea will soon be ready to resume the contacts which had been planned with South Korea and the United States. These offer an important chance to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem and reduce tension in the peninsula.

Rhino Horn

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with the Governor of Hong Kong on rhino horn stock piles and ivory sales.

Mr. Baldry: We keep in close touch with the Hong Kong Government on the international trade in endangered species. Controls over the trade are rigorously enforced in Hong Kong. The possession and sale of rhino horn is banned in Hong Kong. The domestic sale of ivory in Hong Kong does not infringe controls over trade in endangered species.

Governors' Residences (Staff)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* butlers, *(b)* cooks and *(c)* domestic servants are employed at the Governors' residences in (i) Bermuda and (ii) Hong Kong; and what is the annual cost of running each residence.

Mr. Baldry: The running costs of the Governors' residences in Bermuda and Hong Kong, and the employment of domestic servants, are the responsibility of the respective Governments. The FCO has no record of either.

Qazi Nawazish Khan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom post in Islamabad has received an application for an appeal to be heard in the United Kingdom against the refusal to grant entry clearance to Qazi Nawazish Khan, Ref. IMM C1490; when the post expects to despatch an explanatory statement to Mr. Khan's representative in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In the absence of any information in London about an application for Qazi Nawazish Khan, I have asked the high commission in Islamabad to let me

have a report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Embassies (Running Costs)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total annual budget for running the British embassy in *(a)* Washington, *(b)* Paris, *(c)* Brussels, *(d)* Rome, *(e)* Tokyo, *(f)* Montreal, *(g)* New Dehli and *(h)* Moscow; if he will give for each embassy the annual amount spent on entertaining and hospitality; and how many (i) butlers and (ii) cooks and (iii) other domestic servants are employed at each embassy.

Mr. Baldry: The total cost of running these posts, and the cost of entertainment, in 1992-93, the latest year for which final expenditure figures are available, was as follows:

Post	*Total running cost £ million*	*Entertainment £ thousands*
Washington	13·8	242
Paris	16·7	359
Brussels	3·6	50
Rome	7·1	89
Tokyo	14·5	293
Montreal	0·6	21
New Delhi	6·3	55
Moscow	5·1	102

The numbers of domestic staff employed are:

Post	*Butlers*	*Cook/ cook help*	*Other*
Washington	1	3	16·0
Paris	1	1	15·0
Brussels	1	1	3·5
Rome	1	2	6·5
Tokyo	1	3	10·5
Montreal	—	—	1·5
New Delhi	—	3	20·5
Moscow	—	3	7·0

Colombia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts and representations he has made to the Government of Colombia concerning the view of Amnesty International on human rights abuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are in regular touch with the Colombian Government on human rights. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the concern felt in this country when President-elect Samper called him on 19 July.

Turkey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Turkey concerning the arrest and trial of parliamentary members of the Democratic party; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the need for democratization and constitutional change with Prime Minister Ciller in Istanbul on 10 June. Her Majesty's ambassador in Ankara has made clear to the Turkish Government our strong concern about the action against Democratic party members of parliament.

Belize-Guatemala Road Link

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments with regard to the United Kingdom's 1991 aid pledge for a joint Belize—Guatemala road link.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have decided to authorise the Belize element of Her Majesty's Government's pledge. Subject to satisfactory appraisal, the £7·5 million Belizean share of the pledge will be used to contribute to the financing of the southern highway project, which is the Belize Government's next infrastructure priority.

As relations between Belize and Guatemala develop, we hope to be able to proceed with the Guatermala element of the aid commitment.

European Union (Subsidiarity)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the application of the principle of subsidiarity in the European Union.

Mr. Hurd: The number of new Commission proposals for principal legislation fell to 25 in the first five months of 1994. This confirms the continuing downward trend which resulted in a fall from 185 new proposals in 1990, to 75 in 1993.

The Commission has withdrawn 12 new proposals in line with their undertakings at the Edinburgh and Brussels European Councils. These include a number of proposals which threatened to be particularly difficult for the United Kingdom, such as the draft Directive on Liability of Service Supplies.

Twelve more proposals are to be amended on subsidiarity grounds. The Commission is also making greater use of white and green consultative papers, in order to take proper account of the effect of proposed legislation on those who would be affected by it.

The Commission's work programme includes subsidiarity reviews of environmental, rights of residence, and pharmaceuticals legislation. In the customs area, a review has led to the replacement of 75 instruments with just two regulations.

We look forward to further evidence of progress in the Commission's detailed report to the Essen Council in December, and we are continuing our regular discussions of subsidiarity with our partners and with the Commission.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Copies of the foundation's annual report for 1993-94 were placed in the Libraries of the House today.

In its second year, with funding of £2 million, the foundation supported 236 projects, compared with 140 last year. They ranged from the provision of transistors to Belgrade's independent TV station, Studio B, to funding a field worker to provide voter education in Soweto prior to the South African elections. The cost of individual projects ranged from £300 to £60,000 but most were in the range of £5,000 to £15,000.

We welcome the diversity of the foundation's projects and its commitment to continuous improvement in the already high degree of its cost-effectiveness.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 18 and 19 July.

Mr. Hurd: I attended the Council.

There was an open debate on the German presidency's programme. My intervention centred on the EU's relations with central and eastern Europe and making common foreign and security policy more effective.

The presidency and Commission briefed member states on follow-up to the White Paper.

The Council discussed the establishment of the Consultative Commission on racism and xenophobia, as agreed at the Corfu European Council. The United Kingdom will nominate its representatives by the end of July. The chairman of the consultative commission will be decided when all United Kingdom members have been appointed.

The Council discussed a Commission paper on relations between the European Union and the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Ministers approved a declaration urging the parties to accept the contact group plan for a negotiated settlement in Bosnia. The presidency reported on plans to inaugurate the EU administration of Mostar on 25 July. Ministers also discussed the situation in the Croatian Krajina and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

The Council had a general discussion on a number of issues likely to be discussed with the European Parliament in the autumn.

The President of the Commission reported to the Council on the EU-Canada summit in Bonn on 6 July, and the EU-US summit in Berlin on 12 July.

The Council also discussed the outcome of the G7 summit in Naples.

On the Mediterranean, the Commission briefed Ministers on the state of negotiations with Morocco, Tunisia and Israel on new partnership agreements. While those with Tunisia and Israel were making good progress, important differences with Morocco remained to be resolved. The Council agreed conclusions reaffirming the need to deepen EU-Mediterranean relations.

The Council approved negotiating mandates for interim agreements with Russia, Moldova, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and agreed certain changes to the negotiating mandate for a partnership and co-operation agreement with Moldova.

The Council agreed that South Africa should become a beneficiary under its generalised system of preferences, for a list of products to be determined by the end of this month. The Commission reported on its recent meetings with the South African Government, with whom it hopes to negotiate an interim bilateral agreement in the next few weeks, based on the conclusions of the April FAC.

The Council discussed a Dutch-Danish proposal on revised procedures for the handling of requests for documents. The United Kingdom supported attempts to meet Dutch and Danish concerns and voted in favour, but the proposal was voted down.

The Commission presented a strategy paper on strengthening EU-Asia relations. The presidency asked COREPER and the Political Committee to examine ways of enhancing the relationship, and to report back to the Council.

The Council reached agreement on the legal base for the conclusion of the EC-India and EC-Sri Lanka co-operation agreements by qualified majority vote. Portugal and Greece opposed.

The Council agreed by qualified majority vote—with Spain, Portugal and Greece voting against—to an increase of just under 30 per cent in the quota for imports from China of stuffed toys, customs classification 9503 41, for the period March to December 1994. Proposals for similar increases in the quotas for non-stuffed toys representing animals or non-human creatures, 9503 49, and certain miscellaneous toys, 9503 90, were not agreed—Spain, Portugal, Greece and France voting against. The latter two proposals are to be considered further by COREPER.

The Commission reported on the progress of work on proposals to establish a common regime for the use of OPT—outward processing in the textile sector. It was agreed that, due to delays in agreeing the overall regime, the Commission would prepare a separate proposal to establish duty exemption for OPT conducted with the countries of central and eastern Europe.

The Council took note of a number of measures which will be introduced with the aim of improving the effectiveness of procedures in the common foreign and security policy intergovernmental pillar.

Free trade agreements were signed with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Council agreed the conditions for the release of a 35 mecu balance of payments grant for Albania.

The Council agreed in principle to provide food aid to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The Commission reported to the Council on the outcome of the OECD negotiations for an international shipbuilding agreement, which ended on 17 July. France indicated its opposition to the conclusion of the agreement in its present form and requested the Commission to continue negotiations. The Council will return to this issue at its meeting on 4 October.

Export Licences

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance is available to officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to assist them in considering export licence applications; and whether this guidance is available to the public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Departments in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office involved in considering export licence applications are given a guide on relevant procedures and criteria, which is regularly updated.

A copy of the latest issue will be placed in the Library in due course. Copies will also be available from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Dell Invoice

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take regarding the Dell invoice, a copy of which his Department has recently received; and if he will make a statement on the implications in the document for United Kingdom sovereignty.

Mr. Needham: We do not have sufficient information about the specific case raised to answer the question in full; however, Her Majesty's Government reject claims by foreign Governments to exorbitant extraterritorial control over the re-export of foreign-origin goods and technology. We recognise, however, that we cannot prevent foreign Governments from making such claims or seeking to enforce them in their own territories.

Her Majesty's Government's judgment has therefore been that United Kingdom companies and individuals should generally be allowed to make a commercial decision on whether or not to comply with such requirements.

Any goods or technology exported from the United Kingdom which are controlled under the Export of Goods (Control) Order, as amended, must comply with the licensing requirements set out in that order. This requirement is not altered by the fact that the exporter of the goods has also elected to comply with a foreign nation's export regulations.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the United Kingdom economy. Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislation and adminstrative burdens. They also provide direct assistance where appropriate and are currently establishing a network of business links to provide high-quality, business support across the country. The Department regularly reviews and monitors its policies in relation to small firms. Ministers and officials are in constant contact with small firms' representative organisations, professional bodies and other Government Departments, to ensure that policies reflect the need of the small business sector.

The report "Small Firms in Britain 1994" was published by this Department on 7 July. This report surveys developments in the sector, including key statistical indicators and sets out details of Government policy in relation to small firms. Although aimed at all sectors, the measures announced in the recently published White Paper on competitiveness have clear implications for small firms. The initiatives announced will encourage the growth of the small firms sector through well targeted tax relief, further deregulation, help with finance, help with information and advice, help with consultancy and management best practice, and help with business and skills training.

Specific measures operated by my Department to assist small businesses include:

Business Link. The development of a network of Business Link outlets is a key element in the strategy to assist small firms. Each Business Link will provide advice, counselling, diagnostic work and information through Personal Business Advisers. They will provide a single point of access to a wide range of high quality business services. There are 35 Business Link outlets open and a total of 110 Business Link proposals have been approved through the quarterly Assessment Panel. By the end of 1994, there will be at least 50 Business Links operating. By the end of 1995 it is envisaged that every company within England will have access to a Business Link outlet.

Local Business Support Services. DTI funds Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) to encourage the growth and competitiveness of local businesses through high quality, accessible and coherent services.

TECs contracts with local partners, especially Chambers of Commerce, Local Enterprise Agencies and Local Authorities, to meet local needs by delivering information and advice services; business counselling for new and existing businesses, business diagnostic services and business skills training—including skills seminars, masterclass, action learning groups and open learning programmes, particularly for managers and owner managers of small firms.

Late Payment. The Consultation Paper, "Late Payment of Commercial Debt", was issued on 1 November 1993 to seek the views of the business community on possible options to address late payment.

The outcome of the consultation was announced in the White Paper on Competitiveness. A range of practical measures is to be introduced to improve court procedures, ensure government departments and their agencies pay promptly, improve the visibility of the payment policies of public companies, improve credit management and debt collection skills and develop proposals for a British Standard for prompt payment.

There are continuing indications that payment times in the United Kingdom are reducing and are below the European average. The new measures will build upon this improvement.

Loan Guarantee Scheme. The Loan Guarantee Scheme facilitates access to finance for small firms.

The enhancements announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spring Budget Statement were implemented on 1 July 1993. These changes have led to a sharp increase in Scheme usage and the highest levels of lending since 1984. In the 12 months to June 1993, 4,752 loans were guaranteed to a value of £200·613 million.

We are introducing a pilot scheme in September to offer support and counselling to small firms using the Loan Guarantee Scheme. This will help small firms identify their strengths and weaknesses, and offer advice. The service will be delivered through Training and Enterprise Councils, Business Links and Enterprise Agencies and will cover approximately 10-15 per cent. of Scheme applications. The pilot will run for three years.

Innovation. This Department continues to be active in assisting small firms to improve their access to technology and to exploit new ideas. Initiatives include:

Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (SMART). Last year 180 new projects were supported with grants and I expect the same number to be successful in this year's competition.

Support for Products Under Research (SPUR). In the 12 months to March 1994 grants totalling almost £12 million were awarded to 139 projects. There will be a similar level of support this year.

EUREKA. Last year the United Kingdom participated in 49 announced EUREKA projects, involving 76 organisations, including 28 small to medium sized enterprises. This year the United Kingdom participated in 36 announced projects, involving 62 organisations, 23 of which were smaller companies.

Teaching Company Scheme (TCS). This facilitates technology transfer and provides industry-based training for high quality graduates through partnerships between academia and business. A target of TCS programmes supported by DTI is that 80 per cent. should involve small and medium-sized enterprises.

Senior Academics in Industry Scheme (SAIS) enables senior and experienced academic staff to work in companies for up to six months on strategic transfer projects. Preference is given to smaller firms and costs are shared by the companies and DTI.

Shell Technology Enterprise Programme (STEP). This is a national placement scheme for undergraduates. STEP aims to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to consider employing graduates and to provide undergraduates with experience in industry. DTI support of STEP since 1992 has enabled expansion of the scheme so that there is now a target of 1,000 placements in the summer of 1994.

Export Promotion. This Department together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide, through the Overseas Trade Services, advice, information, and financial support to help UK exporters win overseas business. This work is particularly aimed at smaller and less experienced exporters. An independent monthly survey of the delivery of the services shows a consistently high level of customer satisfaction and some 90 per cent. of respondents regularly say that they will use the services again. Details of the services and their take up are set out in the "British Overseas Trade Board's Annual Report 1993-94 and Forward Plan", as are details of the Overseas Trade Services priorities and main activities for the year to come. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Enterprise Initiative Consultancy Scheme. In the year ending March 1994, 17,995 applications for the Scheme were received and 10,423 were completed. This brought the total number of applications to 135,700 with 65,300 completions.

The Consultancy Scheme did not end as scheduled in March 1994; the President of the Board of Trade announced on 9 December 1993 that the scheme will stay open until a further 10,000 applications have been received. Beyond that, a new package of support will be introduced, including a Diagnostic and Consultancy Service which will be available exclusively through Business Links from the summer; a new Consultancy Brokerage Service which is currently undergoing trials with Business Links and TECs will be launched nationally by the end of the year, and technology-related advice in a number of forms, including innovation and technology counsellors who are being funded on a pilot basis in the first Business Links.

Deregulation. Under the Deregulation Initiative over 870 regulations have now been identified for repeal or amendment. Many of these reforms will be of particular benefit to small firms.

Following the recommendation of the original business task forces that, when formulating new regulations the interests of small firms should be the first consideration, a small firms litmus test was introduced on 19 January 1994, as part of the compliance cost assessment for the new regulatory proposals.

The new Deregulation Task force, chaired by Francis Maude, which was announced on 6 July will be looking particularly at the burden of regulation on small firms.

Iraq (Exports)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present remaining exposure on Export Credits Guarantee Department cover on exports to Iraq prior to August 1990.

Mr. Needham: ECGD's exposure on Iraq as at the end of June 1994 is £652 million.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outstanding exposure of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover on exports to Iraq in August 1990; and what claims were paid or offsetting revenue achieved, by the end of March in 1991 and by the same date in each succeeding year.

Mr. Needham: ECGD's estimate of its exposure on Iraq as at the end of each of the last four financial year ends is as follows:

Year	*Unrecovered claims £ million*	*Estimate of claims to be £ million*	*Total exposure £ million*
March 1991	205	543	748
March 1992	392	296	688
March 1993	492	160	652
March 1994	555	97	652

The figures as at March 1994 remain provisional pending publication of ECGD's trading accounts for the 1993-94 financial year.

Comparative data are not available for the position at August 1990 but exposure then was estimated at £1·1 billion, including £103 million of unrecovered claims.

Nitric Acid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information has been received by his Department from British Nuclear Fuels plc in regard to its plans to import radioactively contaminated nitric acid from the United States Department of Energy nuclear complex at Hanford, Washington state; and what licensing arrangements cover the import of contaminated acids for recycling at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the company, subject to meeting appropriate regulatory requirements. Specific import licences are required for acids containing certain nuclear materials.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what capacity exists in United Kingdom industry to manufacture nitric acid; and whether the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations apply to all nitric acid manufacturing plant.

Mr. Heseltine: A figure for production capacity for nitric acid is not available but the chemical is made by a number of companies in the United Kingdom. Responsibility for administering the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 rests with the Health and Safety Executive. I understand that some, but no all, sites manufacturing nitric acid are subject to the requirements of CIMAH.

Coal Industry

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which companies are advising him in respect of coal privatisation; and what payments have been made in each case.

Mr. Eggar: The companies advising the Department on coal privatisation are as follows:

N. M. Rothschild
Clifford Chance
John T. Boyd
Touche Ross
R. P. S. Consultants
Dewe Rogerson
Wardell Armstrong
Peter Williams
Brodies W. S.
Mason Land Survey Ltd.
Drivers Jonas

The total expenditure on coal privatisation consultants in 1993-94 was approximately £10·2 million, including VAT. Payments to individual consultants are commercial, in confidence.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the Department of the Environment in respect of planning and environmental considerations relating to opencast coal mining sites to be offered for sale.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has had regular discussions with the Department of the Environment about planning and opencast issues relating to opencast mining. The preliminary memorandum issued in April by N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd. made it clear that the grant of planning consents necessary for the extraction of coal would remain a matter for the planning authorities.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Coal to ensure that potential purchasers of Coal Products also have the opportunity of acquiring its Hyload joint venture.

Mr Eggar: The sale of Coal Products Ltd. and of Hyload are matters for British Coal. I understand that the corporation is carefully considering all the relevant factors in reaching decisions on the future of Hyload.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had about the future of British Coal Enterprise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in continuing contact with British Coal and British Coal Enterprise about the future of BCE.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the timetable by which the coal authority will become operational; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is my aim to set up the coal authority as soon as practicable. I have already announced the initial accommodation arrangements for the authority and its chairman and chief executive designates. The process of recruiting staff is under way.

Mr Alison: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what diversion of coal movements by rail to road from Gascoigne Wood drift mine near Selby have been occasioned by the current series of one-day rail strikes; what planning conditions are breached by these road movements; and what planning authorisation has been sought to give effect to these road movements.

Mr.Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made over the disposal of British Coal's non-operational land and property interest; by what mechanisms such ownerships will be disposed of; over what time scale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are currently considering the options with British Coal. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Coal to ensure that the management and employees of Coal Products Ltd. have an opportunity of securing that company.

Mr. Eggar: The sale of Coal Products Ltd. is a matter for British Coal. I understand that there is interest in a management employee buy-out and that British Coal has made financial support available to assist with the preparation of a MEBO bid.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the advice he has received from N. M. Rothschild in respect of opencast coal mining sites to be offered for sale to private mining companies.

Mr. Eggar: N. M. Rothschild continues to provide advice on a range of matters on a day-to-day basis. Operating opencast sites included in the regional coal companies are listed in the preliminary memorandum issued by N. M. Rothschild on 13 April. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The preliminary memorandum also explains that the regional coal companies will include portfolios of prospective opencast sites where potentially recoverable reserves have been identified by British Coal.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of opencast sites in Staffordshire which he proposes to offer for sale under the Coal Industry Act 1992.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal operates one opencast site in Staffordshire, Bleak House near Cannock. The preliminary memorandum issued by N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd. in April explains that it is proposed to offer the site as part of the central south regional coal company.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *603*, what was the average annual increase in output per head in manufacturing in the United Kingdom, the USA, Germany and Japan from 1990 to the latest available date; and what effect the relative changes have had on competitiveness.

Mr. Heseltine: Between 1990 and 1993 the estimated annual growth in manufacturing output per head was 3·2 per cent. in the United Kingdom, 3·7 per cent. in the United States of America, −2·6 per cent. in Germany and −3·8 per cent. in Japan. Improvements in productivity are key to increased competitiveness.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *603*, if he will publish the average annual increase in output per person in 1980-89 and 1964-73 for the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Germany and Japan together with the percentage change in each country's share and the value of volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries, the percentage change between 1980 and 1989 in each country's share of the import market for manufactures in the national markets for which he has held or holds such records.

Mr. Heseltine: The information on output per person and shares of import markets for manufactures is given in the tables.

Information on percentage changes in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and Japan's shares by value of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries can be readily derived from

information available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed via the Library of the House. Corresponding information for the shares by volume is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Growth in manufacturing output per head

Percentage pa

	United Kingdom	*USA*	*Germany*	*Japan*
1964-73	3·9	3·4	3·9	9·8
1980-89	4·9	3·9	2·3	3·4

Sources: OECD, CSO.

Percentage changes in United Kingdom, USA, German, Japanese shares by value of import markets of manufactures[1]

	Percentage change in share 1980-89			
	United Kingdom	*USA*	*Germany*	*Japan*
Import market				
Belgium-Luxembourg	−6·4	−35·6	−10·5	1·0
Canada	−28·3	−12·4	17·7	53·1
France	12·1	−14·9	−5·5	50·4
Germany (Fed. Rep.)	7·2	−2·0	—	58·3
Italy	−11·6	−28·2	1·8	34·9
Japan	−27·1	−20·3	9·8	—
Netherlands	−10·6	−5·4	−9·6	24·0
Sweden	−24·2	−1·0	−4·1	69·0
Switzerland	−42·6	−10·2	10·1	25·4
United Kingdom	—	−12·0	26·6	44·2
United States	−22·7	—	−27·8	3·3

[1] Manufactures are defined as Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.
Source: OECD Series C.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the change in import penetration by manufacturing industry between 1980 and the year ending June 1989 together with the corresponding change in United Kingdom output per person, *(b)* the percentage change between 1980 and 1989 in the United Kingdom share of the value and volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries, *(c)* the percentage change between 1980 and 1989 in the United Kingdom share of the import market for manufactures in the EEC and in the national markets for which he holds records and *(d)* the relative volume of exports to imports of manufactures in 1980 and 1989 and the corresponding surplus or deficit on trade in manufactures.

Mr. Needham: The information on changes in import penetration can be readily derived from information regularly published in table 12.2 of the Central Statistical Office's "Annual Abstract of Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The corresponding information on United Kingdom output per person, the changes in United Kingdom shares by value and volume of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries, and the changes in the surplus/deficit in trade in manufactures in 1980 and 1989, can be readily derived from information available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed via the Library of the House.

The changes 1980-1989 in the United Kingdom's share of the import market for manufactures in the EC, and the United Kingdom's relative volume of exports to imports of manufactures for 1980 and 1989 are given in the table.

Percentage change 1980-1989 in United Kingdom share by value of EC countries imports of manufactures[1]

Import market	*Percentage change*
EC12	−6·6
Belgium-Luxembourg	−6·4
Denmark	−17·9
France	12·1
Germany (Fed. Rep.)	7·2
Greece	−3·9
Ireland	−26·8
Italy	−11·6
Netherlands	−10·6
Portugal	−37·5
Spain	0·6

Source: OECD Series C

United Kingdom relative volume[2] *of manufactures*[1]

1980	127·2
1989	86·4

Source: CSO Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics Annual Supplement 1992 Tables A10 and A11.

[1] Manufactures are defined as Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.
[2] Export volume of manufactures index as a percentage of the import volume of manufactures index.

System X Telecommunications System

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on whether the System X telecommunications system exported since 1989 to the United States of America, Russia, China, Colombia, Gibraltar, Kenya, India, Kuwait, the Falklands and the Philippines have fully conformed to the ISDN protocol as defined by the CC1IITT 7 committee.

Mr. Heseltine: The supplier has informed me that the equipment concerned met the customers' requirements at the time of export. More detailed information is a matter for the company concerned.

Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing information available to him in index form of the latest figures for *(a)*

output, *(b)* output per hour and *(c)* unit labour costs in Japan, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Heseltine: Information on the latest figures, in index form, for output of the United States, United Kingdom and EC is regularly published in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's "Main Economic Indicators", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Corresponding information for the whole economy on output per hour and unit labour costs is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report,* column *603,* what was the average increase in output per head in manufacturing in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and Japan from 1979 to 1989 and from 1989 to the latest available date; by how much United Kingdom unit labour costs in manufacturing fell relative to those of the other three countries in each period as a result of the increase in output per head; by how much the exchange rate would have to change to offset the differences in the rate of change in the unit labour costs in United Kingdom manufacturing in each period as a result of the change in productivity; and what equivalent information he holds on *(a)* France, *(b)* Italy and (c) other EC countries on average.

Mr. Heseltine: Information on changes in output per head in manufacturing is given in the table. Figures for the EC as a whole are not available on a comparable basis.

Information on the United Kingdom's relative unit labour costs in manufacturing is published regularly in Central Statistical Office's "Economic Trends", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Percentage/per annum

	1979-89	*1989-93*
United Kingdom	4·0	2·9
USA	3·6	3·2
Germany	2·0	−1·4
France	2·5	0·3
Italy	3·4	−1·3
Japan	3·4	−2·5

Sources: OECD, CSO.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report,* column *421,* if he will make a statement on how his Department calculates whether collating information in relation to answering parliamentary questions constitutes disproportionate cost.

Mr. Heseltine: If the preparation of an answer is likely to cost more than the cost threshold, Ministers will consider whether to refuse to answer it on the ground of disproportionate cost. The current threshold of £450, calculated by the Treasury, was announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, on 25 October 1993, *Official Report,* column *425.*

In respect of my earlier reply, the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only with a great deal of staff effort.

Mining Subsidence

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what monitoring of consumer satisfaction will be undertaken for future and current procedures dealing with claims relating to mining subsidence;

(2) how current claims for mining subsidence will be dealt with in active coalfields where coal extraction continues after August;

(3) how private mining companies will compensate persons suffering from subsidence caused by their activities; and what action will be taken to ensure the rights of persons suffering damage;

(4) how he will protect home owners' interests in future subsidence compensation cases involving private companies;

(5) what plans he has to consider bringing forward amendments to the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991;

(6) if he will make a statement on the arbitration procedure for coalfield subsidence matters after August.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the Coal Industry Act 1994 and to the extensive documentation which my Department has made available, in particular: the draft subsidence regulations, the draft guide to claimants' rights, the revised coal authority explanatory note, and the revised draft model coal authority licensing documents.

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how current case loads of mining subsidence claims will be dealt with after August; and what continuity arrangements have been set up for this work.

Mr. Eggar: This a matter for British Coal and other bodies, which may, under the Coal Industry Act 1994, acquire responsibility for subsidence in due course.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if a single company will be able to operate both inspection and repair services for subsidence work in coal mining areas.

Mr. Eggar: It is not envisaged that the Coal Authority would permit these roles to be combined.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what will be the length of contracts for subsidence work in coalfield areas;

(2) what projections he has for the number of persons dealing with mining subsidence claims after August;

(3) in what circumstances tenders for coal mining subsidence work were accepted from loss adjusters, estate agents and insurance companies.

Mr. Eggar: This a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many persons are currently employed in dealing with compensation claims within the mining industry.

Mr. Eggar: I am informed by British Coal that it currently employs 81 people, in technical and clerical grades, to deal with claims for damage caused by coal mining subsidence.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what insurance arrangements are available for persons who have suffered, are suffering or may suffer from subsidence damage from coal extraction.

Mr. Eggar: Decisions on the terms and conditions of insurance cover, and whether to offer cover at all, are matters solely for insurers to determine in the light of their commercial judgment. Where a property has been affected by coal mining subsidence damage, the statutory provisions for dealing with coal mining subsidence damage mean that the cost of such damage is borne by the coal industry. Coal mining subsidence should not therefore be pertinent to decisions on whether or not to offer insurance cover so long as satisfactory repairs have been carried out. The Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991 provides those affected with a right to require that repairs are carried out to their reasonable satisfaction.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have taken place on subsidence compensation between officials of his Department and British Coal property division management; when these meetings took place; what was the outcome; and if he will put their minutes in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: Officials of my Department have had discussions with British Coal on a wide range of issues, including subsidence matters. The Government's policy with regard to subsidence in future is set out in the Coal Industry Act 1994, and in the documentation which my Department has made available, in particular the draft subsidence regulations, the draft guide to claimants' rights, the revised Coal Authority explanatory note, and the revised draft model Coal Authority licensing documents.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements are available to provide compensation for subsidence where old mineworkings are shown to be the cause.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, British Coal is responsible for the repair of, or compensation for, all damage caused by coal mining subsidence in the United Kingdom. The age of mining does not affect claimants' rights, provided that any claim is made within six years of the damage first being noticed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade where extra costs are identified by companies undertaking repairs to properties suffering subsidence damage; and what safeguards are available to ensure that these are reported and undertaken.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, claimants have a right to require that repairs are carried out to their reasonable satisfaction. All repairs are at British Coal's cost.

South America

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what terms apply to assistance from the DTI overseas project fund to studies by United Kingdom firms directed to securing contracts abroad in South America.

Mr. Needham: The overseas projects fund is available to assist United Kingdom companies with the costs of pursuing major projects overseas. The fund can help meet the costs of feasibility studies, consultancies and other pre-contractual activities with the object of increasing the number of contracts United Kingdom companies can pursue and win. The maximum amount of assistance offered is 50 per cent. of the costs involved. Where a contract is won with its help, overseas projects fund assistance is repayable.

Electricity Disconnections

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to why there is no code of practice governing the disconnection of commercial premises by electricity companies.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply. Disconnection of premises both commercial and domestic are covered by provisions contained in schedule 6 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many warrants in respect of electricity disconnection have been issued by Manweb during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Neither my Department nor that of the Lord Chancellor keeps records of the number of warrants issued to individual companies in respect of electricity disconnection.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what notice must be given to electricity customers before an electricity company may apply for a warrant for disconnection of electricity.

Mr. Eggar: Under schedule 6 of the Electricity Act 1989, an electricity company can disconnect premises no earlier than 20 working days after the issue of a bill in the case of a domestic customer. For non-domestic customers, the period is 15 working days. In both instances, two working days notice is required before disconnection occurs.

The Rights of Entry (Gas and Electricity Boards) Act 1954 does not require notice to be given to customers before application by an electricity company to a magistrate for a warrant of entry. All companies do, however, notify customers that this may happen where a bill remains unpaid and there is the possibility of disconnection occurring.

Gas Storage Facilities

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requirement is made of licensed suppliers of gas to retain storage facilities for a given proportion of their supply obligations over any given period, to be held in land storage.

Mr. Eggar: Storage obligations will be set out in the network code which is currently being negotiated between British Gas, the Office of Gas Supply and independent suppliers.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when it is proposed that BAA's monopoly of London's three principal airports shall be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the Airports Act 1986, the CAA is required to refer designated airports to the MMC every five years before setting a formula which governs the amount which may be raised annually through charges. BAA's three London airports are to be reviewed in 1995-96.

Impact Assessments

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the criteria for determining which directives that emanate from his Department receive a fiche d'impact assessment.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Decisions to prepare assessments under the fiche d'impact system are made by the European Commission. The basis for such decisions was most recently restated in a resolution on administrative simplification for enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, made by the Council of Ministers Industry Council meeting under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade during the British presidency on 24 November 1992. This invited the European Commission to prepare an assessment on all Commission proposals which may give rise to substantial burden for enterprises. My Department is assiduous in urging the Commission to undertake an assessment of every proposal relevant to our responsibilities which may give rise to a substantial burden for United Kingdom businesses. The deregulation unit also keeps watch on the Commission's operation of the fiche d'impact system, and concerts pressure from United Kingdom Departments for an assessment of every proposal which may give rise to a substantial burden for United Kingdom businesses.

Utilities (Right of Entry)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the legal obligations to ensure that premises entered by force in accordance with section (2) of the Rights of Entry (Gas and Electricity Boards) Act 1954 are left in a secure and safe state after such entry has been gained.

Mr. Eggar: Section 2(5) of the Rights of Entry (Gas and Electricity Boards) Act 1954 requires any person who is authorised to enter premises by force under a warrant granted under section 2 of the Act to leave the premises as effectually secured against trespassers as he found them, if the premises are unoccupied or the occupier is temporarily absent.

Cable Companies (Damage)

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *23*, regarding damage by cabling companies, if he will in future monitor and publish a list of incidents of damage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Enforcement of the street works requirements of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 is the responsibility of the street authority concerned. Instances of damage arising from street works would normally come to their attention during the exercise of their functions under the Act, and it would be for individual authorities to decide whether to publish a list of incidents.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the source of funding for the Office of Electricity Regulation.

Mr. Eggar: The Office of Electricity Regulation is funded under the normal vote arrangements. OFFER is, however, empowered by the Electricity Act 1989 and Electricity Act 1989 (Fees) Order 1990 to recover its full economic costs through the levying of fees for electricity meter examination and certification, electricity licence application fees and the granting of annual licences to electricity generators, transmission companies and public electricity and second-tier suppliers.

Research Laboratories

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set his Department's research laboratories for 1994-95.

Mr. Heseltine: As I stated in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), on 14 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *251-53*, reporting the outcome of the review into the future options for my Department's research laboratories, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, the National Engineering Laboratory and the National Physical Laboratory all have good records of meeting the targets that they have been set and improving their performance from year to year. Their results for last year, which will be made available when their annual reports and accounts for 1993-94 are laid before the House, all show that improvements continued to be made: these have been achieved despite the tougher competition which the laboratories faced in winning and retaining work from public and private sector customers.

The targets that I have set LGC and NEL for 1994-95, together with the five-year targets that were set for NPL on becoming an agency on 3 July 1990, *Official Report*, columns *499-500* are set out in the tables. In addition, I expect the chief executives of the agencies to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to them for reply.

Primary Financial Targets

LGC Recovery of full costs from income for customer work.

NEL Recovery of full costs through "arms-length" contracts from customers by 1994-95.

NPL Recovery of full costs from income for customer work.

Secondary Targets

LGC To achieve an average rate of 90 per cent. for completion of reports on analysis of (or research into) samples by the date agreed with customers for the year as a whole.

To achieve more than 85 per cent. of contract research milestones within the timescale agreed with the customer.

To maintain NAMAS accreditation for the categories of work in which the Laboratory operates, registration for Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) and Laboratory-wide registration to BS5750 (ISO 9001).

NEL To increase the number of non-DTI clients who provide revenues of more than £100k per annum by 50 per cent.

To introduce by September 1994 a revised Divisional base organisation designed to facilate privatisation.

To arrange training programmes to ensure the managers in the revised organisation acquire the new competences needed for a transition to private sector working practice.

By September 1994 to introduce an improved version of the contract completion questionnaire to reflect the input from all clients in 1993-94.

To carry out customer consultation post-completion reviews of 20 per cent. of all contracts in excess of £250k.

By September 1994 to achieve laboratory-wide ISO9001 accreditation for those eligible areas which did not receive accreditation by the end of 1993-94.

NPL To improve to 90 per cent. by 1994-95 the percentage of calibrations completed within six weeks.

To complete at least 95 per cent. of contract research investigations on time over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

To increase by at least 3 per cent. the number of research milestones achieved annually per scientist over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

To reduce the cost of administrative support so that by 1994-95 it represents no more than 20 per cent. of NPL's full economic cost.

To increase the proportion of staff time attributed to programme-related work by 5 per cent. over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

To reduce the cost of NPL per member of project staff by 2 per cent. per annum over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

To secure a combination of output efficiency and cost reduction measures which, taken together, represent a requirement on NPL to improve its overall efficiency by more than 2 per cent. a year over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of the National Weights and Measures Laboratory.

Mr. Heseltine: In my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 14 April 1994, *Official Report,* columns *251-53,* I undertook to make a further announcement on the future of the National Weights and Measures Laboratory.

I am today placing in the Library of the House the report on NWML by the consultants KPMG Peat Marwick.

I have decided that NWML should remain a next steps agency within my Department. I am giving further consideration to moving the agency onto a financial control regime which will provide it with the scope it needs to utilise its expertise and facilities more fully in meeting a wider range of its customers' needs on a self-financing basis.

I have set NWML the following targets for 1994-95:

to ensure that its fee earning activities remain self-financing;

to increase their output per person employed by 2 per cent.;

to reduce the real cost of a programme hour by 2 per cent.;

to complete 92 per cent. of all type examinations within 14 weeks and

to complete 96 per cent. of all calibration jobs (including preparation of certificates) within 4 weeks of acceptance of the work.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of the agency to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

Investment Projects

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's performance in attracting internationally mobile investment projects in 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau announced in its annual report published today that 1993-94 was another very successful year for attracting inward investment into the United Kingdom.

Some 404 direct investment projects were recorded by the IBB for the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. This is an increase of 101 projects over the previous year's recorded figures and demonstrates quite clearly just how attractive the United Kingdom continues to be to overseas investors. It is also worth noting that, based on information supplied at the time of the announcements, 28,727 new jobs are expected to be created—an increase of 12,009 over last year's figures—out of a total of 96,009 jobs linked to the 404 projects.

These results provide strong evidence that, despite ever-increasing competition from elsewhere in the European Community, the United Kingdom has retained its No. 1 spot in Europe for attracting inward investment.

The results are also an indication of the effective partnership that the Invest in Britain Burea has with the many public and private sector organisations involved in the promotion of inward investment at home and, along with colleagues in the overseas posts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in existing and emerging markets abroad.

I am arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Government Departments (Payment of Bills)

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of bills are paid on time by Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Government Departments and their agencies are required to monitor their payment performance and publish the results in their annual reports. The following table lists by Department the proportion of bills paid within the agreed credit period, or within 30 days where no credit period has been agreed, for 1993-94.

The Government recognise that late payment is a serious problem, particularly for small businesses, and it is essential that the Government set an example. Though Government payment performance continues to improve overall, there remains room for further improvement.

New measures were announced in the White Paper on competitiveness. Government Departments and their agencies will now be required to:

abide by the CBI prompt payers code;

set out in their annual reports their payment policies and to state whether they have observed the principles of the CBI code, and

publicise their arrangements for handling complaints of failure to pay on time.

The Government expect all other public sector bodies to follow their lead.

Department/agency	*Per cent. invoices paid within target*
Benefits Agency	94·0
Cabinet Office/OPSS	78·0
Central Statistical Office	77·0
COI	83·0
Crown Prosecution Service	82·0
Customs and Excise	90·0
Defence	99·9
Education	80·0
Employment Department/ACAS	95·6
Employment Service	85·4
Environment	90·0
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	95·0
Health and Safety Executive	89·6
Health	87·1
HMSO	80·0
Home Office	72·0
Inland Revenue	86·0
Lord Chancellor's	89·4
MAFF	85·0
National Heritage	85·0
National Savings	97·6
Northern Ireland Office and NICS	92·0
Overseas Development Administration	88·0
Paymaster General	96·3
Registry of Friendly Societies	95·0
Scottish Office	89·0
Social Security	94·0
Trade and Industry	90·0
Transport	93·6
Treasury	93·0
Welsh Office	87·0

Market Testing

Mr Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has reached a decision on the market testing of IT services in his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: The market test of the IT services branch of the Department has now been concluded and it has been decided to award a contract to Hoskyns Group plc whose bid was judged to represent the best value for money.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial target and capital expenditure limits have been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1994-95.

Mr. Eggar: The UKAEA's financial target for 1994-95 has been set as a 6·7 per cent. return on average capital employed, calculated according to the historic cost convention as modified. The target is based on profit earned on ordinary activities before long-term interest payable and the costs and proceeds of the sale of the UKAEA's facilities services division. I have also approved the UKAEA's capital expenditure programme for the year at £14 million.

Dual-use Goods Regulation

Sir John Hannam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on recent developments in the negotiation of the EC dual-use goods regulation.

Mr. Needham: I am pleased to report that, in the last few days, a text of the regulation, and an associated intergovernmental decision in the form of a joint action under the common foreign and security policy, has been agreed by Ministers of all 12 member states. The agreement marks the first step towards a common system for the control of exports of sensitive goods from the Community. The regulation and joint action are intended to apply from 1 January 1995. Starting from that date, it is envisaged that there will be a transitional period to be reviewed within three years, and during which particularly sensitive dual-use goods will continue to be subject to licensing when despatched from one member state to another. During this period, member states will work to create a strong external control fence around the Community. This will be a prerequisite if all member states are to be in a position to honour their non-proliferation commitments. Depending on the success of this strengthening work and progress in harmonising national export control policies, the member states will decide at the end of the transitional period whether to introduce licence-free trade in all dual-use goods within the Community.

Audit Monitoring

Sir John Hannam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of his review of audit monitoring.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The new arrangements for monitoring registered company auditors were set up under part II of the Companies Act 1989. It was agreed at the time with the recognised supervisory bodies that it would be sensible to review those monitoring systems in the light of experience.

At the end of last year, therefore, I asked the RSBs to report to me on the effectiveness of their monitoring. I also asked Professor Peter Moizer of Leeds university to provide me with an independent assessment of the state of audit monitoring.

I have now considered these reports. They show that the present system of monitoring is generally working well and that the substantial efforts and resources which the RSBs are devoting to it are bringing to light cases of under-performance, and helping to remedy them where they exist. The first two years' monitoring has also shown that there is a range of performance among audit practices, and that there is scope for improvement among many of those inspected.

Against that background, I have therefore asked the RSBs to put in place a wider range of monitoring methods to ensure that overall, and within present resources, a higher proportion of the registered auditor population is inspected than is currently the case; to match the monitoring techniques more closely to the widely differing circumstances of practitioners; and to identify and target those firms where achieving the required standards may present a greater challenge. The RSBs will be submitting these plans to me in the autumn.

These changes will reflect one of the main messages of Professor Moizer's report: the need for the RSBs to adopt greater flexibility in the monitoring methods that they employ. Professor Moizer's report has made a valuable contribution to the development of audit regulation policy, and I am today placing copies of the report in the Libraries of the House.

British Coal (Pensions)

Sir John Hannam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made on drafting the regulations and related documents that will be needed to implement the new arrangements for British Coal pensions after privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: I am today placing in the Libraries of both Houses copies of the latest drafts of the regulations and related documents needed to implement the new arrangements for the mineworkers' pension scheme and British Coal staff superannuation scheme after privatisation. The documents are grouped in six volumes as follows:

1. MPS (Modification) Regulations; MPS Scheme and Rules; MPS Guarantee Deed;
2. SSS (Modification) Regulations; SSS Scheme and Rules; SSS Guarantee Deed;
3. Industry-Wide Coal MPS Regulations; Industry-Wide Coal MPS Trust Deed and Rules; Coal Industry (Protected Persons) Pensions Regulations;
4. Industry-Wide Coal SSS Regulations; Industry-Wide Coal SSS Trust Deed and Rules; Coal Industry (Protected Persons) Pensions Regulations;
5. Memoranda and Articles of Association for MPS Trustees Ltd., Industry-Wide MPS Trustees Ltd. and Industry-Wide MPS Co-ordinator Ltd.;
6. Memoranda and Articles of Association for Coal SSS Trustees Ltd., Industry-Wide Coal SSS Trustees Ltd., and Industry Wide Coal SSS Co-ordinator Ltd.

These draft documents flow from schedule 5—the pensions schedule—of the Coal Industry Act 1994. The drafts are being prepared in close consultation with the trustee of the MPS and SSS and are nearing finalisation. It

is currently intended that the modification regulations for the MPS and SSS should be laid before Parliament in August for coming into force in September. The industry-wide MPS and SSS regulations and the Coal Industry (Protected Persons) Pensions Regulations will be laid later.

Earlier working drafts of the documents contained in volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 as listed above were placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 22 February. Drafts of the documents contained in volumes 5 and 6 have not been provided previously and some explanation of their purpose may be helpful.

The new documents, which are also being prepared in close consultation with the trustees of the MPS and SSS, are the memoranda and articles of association of six new companies: two trustee companies for the modified MPS and SSS, two trustee companies for the industry-wide MPS and SSS and two "co-ordinator companies", whose purpose is explained below. All the pension schemes will provide that the duties of their trustee, which as in the present SSS will be a trustee company, shall be exercised through the board of directors of that trustee company. The directors of the trustee companies will thus have duties and responsibilities corresponding to those of individually appointed trustees. Each of the trustee companies for the modified schemes will have equal numbers of directors appointed on behalf of scheme members and the Government respectively. The trustee companies for the industry-wide schemes will have equal numbers of directors appointed on behalf of employees and employers respectively.

Each of the two industry-wide schemes will be established by a specially formed "co-ordinator company" which will exercise a "principal employer" role under the industry-wide schemes. All the directors of the "co-ordinator companies" will be appointed by employers of members of the relevant industry-wide scheme.

Small Company Audit

Sir John Hannam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the regulations in respect of the abolition of the small company audit to come into effect.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The regulations have been laid before the House today and will enter into force on 11 August 1994.

Regional Challenge

Sir John Hannam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress being made on the implementation of regional challenge.

Mr. Heseltine: As I announced in the White Paper on competitiveness, the first round of regional challenge competitions will be held later this year after the European Commission adopts the "Single Programming Documents" which govern structural funds money. A second round will follow three years later.

In agreement with the Commission, prize money for regional challenge will amount to 10 per cent. of the European regional development fund for each eligible area plus 10 per cent. of that sum from the area's European social fund allocation. This equates to some £160 million across the eligible English and Welsh areas for each of the two rounds of competitions.

The arrangements for the operation of regional challenge will be set out in guidelines which the Government will draw up in the light of consultations with local partnerships.

Bids will need to satisfy the general criteria for structural fund assistance, and will be assessed against a number of additional criteria, to be finalised in the light of the consultations.

They are likely to include:

private sector leverage;
comprehensive area-based regeneration effects;
a significant contribution to regional competitiveness;
strategic importance for the region as a whole; and
contribution to several of the measures specified in the Single Programming Document.

Final decisions on projects will be taken by Ministers on the basis of recommendations from the monitoring committees of local partnerships.

Bofors (Iraqi Exports)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in full the communications his Department has had with various Departments of the Swedish Government in relation to the investigation regarding Bofors exports to Iraq and all the occasions when officers from his Department liaised with officials of the Swedish Government and Bofors; and what action any official in his Department took with regard to Bofors.

Mr. Needham: *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* I am not aware of any such contacts.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants.

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heseltine: *[holding answers 20 July 1994]:* There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers after leaving Government service.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* The information requested, as far as it is available, is as follows:

Name	*Date of Appointment*	*End of Appointment*
Tony Allen	21 March 1994	—
Dr. Walter Eltis	1 January 1993	—
Dr. Alan Kemp	28 May 1992	—
Lady Strathnaver	21 April 1992	—
Lance Anisfeld	21 April 1991	10 April 1992
Jeremy Mayhew	24 September 1990	10 April 1992
Mrs. Katherine Ramsey	25 July 1989	14 July 1990
Michael Simmonds	23 October 1989	30 July 1990
Charles Hendry	1 September 1988	24 July 1989
Peter Luff	28 September 1988	24 July 1989

Universal Postal Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 12 July, *Official Report*, column *509*, what view the British Government have offered on whether the legal basis for the European Commission's proposed directive defining the set of services which may be reserved at national level should be article 90 or article 100A of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* We have made clear to the European Commission our view that it would be preferable for all directives implementing the single market in postal services to have as their legal basis article 100A of the treaty of Rome. We accept, however, that if satisfactory progress under article 100A proves impossible, the Commission could resort to article 90 for a directive setting limits to the services that may be reserved at national level.

SCOTLAND

Water Supply

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what access the proposed new water boards will have to personal details of water users including household size or income, which is currently held by regional councils.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

NHS Land

Mrs. Fife: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list from 1991-92 onwards those health boards and NHS trusts who have appealed to him against local authorities' refusal of planning permission for their intended use of surplus land; what was the total acreage involved in each case; and which appeals were approved by himself.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table. Each of the appeals detailed were delegated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland for determination by a Scottish Office inquiry reporter.

Appeal received	*Health board/NHS trust*	*Site area*	*Determination*
	Lothian health board		
21 November 1991	Northern General hospital, Edinburgh	1.21 hectares (3 acres)	Appeal sustained 2 July 1992
	Greater Glasgow health board		
12 November 1993	Broomhill hospital, Kirkintilloch	1.21 hectares (3 acres)	Not yet determined
3 June 1994	Leverndale hospital, Glasgow	1.21 hectares (3 acres)	Not yet determined

Publicity

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the publicity budget for each Scottish Office Department for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Stewart: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the UK economy. The Government help small firms by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislative and administrative burdens. The Scottish Office Industry Department also provides direct assistance where appropriate including the regional enterprise grant scheme which has elements for investment and innovation projects, and regional selective assistance.

Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their network of 22 local enterprise companies have at their disposal a wide range of measures through which they are able to support new and established small businesses. A significant recent initiative by SE has been the establishment with local authorities, chambers of commerce and other partners of the Scottish business shop network in order to provide easy access to first-stop business advice. Actual and planned performance indicators for the range of Scottish Enterprise network activity, including advice to businesses and new business start-ups, are published annually in the annual reports of these organisations and in the expenditure plans for the Departments of my right hon. Friend.

Water Charges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what central and local government sources of information the proposed new water companies will have access in fixing water charges, taking into account the ability to pay.

Sir Hector Monro: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Sight Tests

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the estimated saving to the NHS in Scotland from the abolition of free NHS sight tests in 1989.

Mr. Stewart: We estimate that the savings made to April 1994 as a result of the restriction of the categories of people eligible for an NHS sight test in 1989 were between £36 million and £39 million in cash terms.

Purchasing Advice

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will promote the purchase of cruelty-free and environmentally-friendly products by advice to his purchasing departments and to local authorities.

Mr. Lang: My Department published a policy statement on green housekeeping in January 1992 and has subsequently taken a number of initiatives to increase its use of products which are environmentally friendly. A review of the 1992 policy is now being undertaken with a view to further promoting the use of environmentally friendly products within the Scottish Office.

It is for local authorities to determine their own purchasing policies. But the Government seek to encourage them to adopt a systematic approach to the management of the environmental impact of their activities. Accordingly, my Department ran two workshops for local authorities in February to promote guidance published in October 1993 on a voluntary eco-management and audit scheme. In September 1993, my Department published a model local environmental charter in consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Patient Waiting Times

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the circulation of the information services division of the Common Services Agency of the NHS Scotland document, "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin".

Mr. Stewart: A copy of the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin" is sent to the following:

Health board general managers
Unit general managers
Directors of finance
Directors of public health
NHS trust chief executives
NHS trust medical directors
Health service information and records officers
Senior officers of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department
Privilege Libraries, including House of Commons Library
The press

On request

Private organisations and members of the public
Other NHS officers
Members of Parliament

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now announce the conclusions of the Forestry Review Group; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 19 July 1994 at columns 177-191.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table to show for each European Community nation the sums currently paid in grant per hectare in respect of planting *(a)* conifers and *(b)* broadleaf trees; what changes are proposed for future years for such schemes; and what items are grant aided.

Sir Hector Monro: There is no common forestry policy in the European Community and member states provide financial support for forestry in many different ways. It is therefore not possible to provide the information requested.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement before the summer recess about his proposals for the future of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to make a statement on the forestry review; and if he will then specify any changes in incentives for planting trees.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Members to the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 19 July at columns. 177-91.

Housing Finance

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for each local authority's housing revenue account in 1979, 1984 and 1989 *(a)* the amount of capital debt, *(b)* the loan charges and *(c)* the rent burden per house per annum based on the best on estimate available of the housing stock in each of these years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Fatal Accident Inquiries

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fatal accident inquiries were held in each procurator fiscal area in Scotland during the last financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows.

Fatal Accident Inquiries Held Financial Year 1993-94

	Numbers
Aberdeen	17
Airdrie	0
Alloa	3
Arbroath	0
Ayr	3
Banff	2
Campbeltown	0
Cupar	5
Dingwall	0
Dornoch	0
Dumbarton	7
Dumfries	2
Dundee	3
Dunfermline	0
Dunoon	2
Duns	0
Edinburgh	9
Elgin	1
Falkirk	2
Forfar	0
Fort William	0
Glasgow	22

	Numbers
Greenock	3
Haddington	0
Hamilton	11
Inverness	4
Jedburgh	2
Kilmarnock	2
Kirkcaldy	5
Kirkcudbright	0
Kirkwall	1
Lanark	5
Lerwick	0
Linlithgow	1
Lochmaddy	0
Oban	1
Paisley	13
Peebles	0
Perth	5
Peterhead	2
Portree	0
Rothesay	0
Selkirk	0
Stirling	4
Stonehaven	2
Stornoway	0
Stranraer	3
Tain	0
Wick	1
Total	143

Rating Valuations

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he has made of the impact of the revaluation of non-domestic properties on the retail, commercial and manufacturing sectors of industry;

(2) if he will make a statement on the revaluation of non-domestic properties in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Comprehensive estimates of the outcome of revaluation are not yet available. Once they are, my right hon. Friend will consider their implications for the setting of 1995-96 rate poundages and other related matters.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from industry or business organisations about the revaluation of non-domestic properties in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Since the beginning of June I have received five letters on this issue.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the revaluation of non-domestic properties.

Mr. Stewart: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any plans to meet COSLA specially to discuss this issue. It is, however, one of the issues that may be discussed in the forum of our regular meetings with COSLA to discuss local government finance matters. The next such meeting is due to be held on 22 July.

Scottish Agricultural Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his latest estimate of the number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Scottish agricultural wages board, for each region of Scotland;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the total number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Scottish agricultural wages board.

Sir Hector Monro: At 1 June 1993 the number of persons employed on agricultural holdings by region and Scotland was:

	Number
Shetland	280
Orkney	563
Western Isles	257
Highland	1,887
Grampian	4,963
Tayside	3,255
Fife	1,550
Lothian	1,639
Borders	2,303
Central	942
Strathclyde	5,030
Dumfries and Galloway	3,630
Scotland	26,299

Troon Housing Office

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Kyle and Carrick district council spent on the refurbishment of its Troon housing office; and how much this project was originally budgeted for.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally. This is a matter for Kyle and Carrick district council.

Veterinary Services

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when officials in his Department last met representatives of the British Veterinary Association to discuss future arrangements for the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Officials from my Department met a representative of the British Veterinary Association in May to discuss the future arrangements for the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme. Following that meeting we are giving future consideration to what changes need to be made to the scheme.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received since 1 January regarding the future of the highlands and islands veterinary services scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Since 1 January 1994, representations have been received from the president of the British Veterinary Association and from the Outer North Isles action group.

Road Improvements

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his proposals for road improvements between Cutty Sark bridge and Newhouse in the Strathclyde region.

Mr. Lang: The line orders and compulsory purchase order for the section of the M8 motorway between Baillieston, to the west of Cutty Sark bridge, and Newhouse were published in November 1993 and May 1994 respectively. These proposals are being taken forward in phases and, subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of

finance, it is provisionally planned that the first of these between Drumpark junction and Chapelhall will start between April 1995 and March 1997.

Suilevan Ferry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the past two years the Suilevan ferry has been loaded to maximum freight capacity on the Stornoway to Ullapool service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office does not hold detailed operational information of this nature. I understand that Caledonian MacBrayne does not have the information requested in a readily available form. I have, however, asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member to explain what information is available on this subject.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out a study of the length of time on waiting lists for local authority, housing association and other accommodation for rent experienced by ethnic minority households.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

St. Andrew's Day

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider the designation of St. Andrew's Day as a public holiday in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Public holidays in Scotland are not defined in statute, but by long tradition and practice are determined by individual local authorities in consultation with local interests. My right hon. Friend has no power to intervene in this process.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the Government's response to the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the Scottish Affairs Committee's first report of Session 1993-94 on drug abuse in Scotland, HC 52.

Mr. Lang: I have today published "Drug Abuse in Scotland: Government Response", Cm 2629. The Government have welcomed the wide-ranging inquiry carried out by the Committee into this complex and serious problem. Many of the issues covered by the Committee are being addressed by the drugs task force led by my noble and learned Friend, the Minister of State and will be reflected in its report. As the Government's response indicates, the Committee's report, with the work of the task force, will help provide a clear and robust framework within which drug misuse in Scotland can be vigorously and comprehensively tackled.

Council Tax

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to make regulations which will prevent council tax payers from having to pay arrears of council tax when their property banding has been altered upwards due to an inaccuracy in the original list.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend proposes to make regulations later this year which will ensure that in future any increases in council tax banding resulting from the correction of an error in the original list will come into effect only from the date on which the list was altered.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he intends to make for the provision of advice to local authorities on staffing issues which arise out of the Government's proposals for local government reorganisation.

Mr. Lang: The proposed restructuring of local government will have significant implications for local authority staff. Clause 12 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill provides for the establishment of a staff commission to exercise functions in relation to the staff and the staffing of authorities. In advance of the commission being established, I have appointed a staff advisory committee, chaired by Mr. Robert Peggie, who took up his appointment on 1 April 1994.

The advisory committee has, in the course of its work, had discussions with a number of local authorities. As a result of those discussions it has become clear that additional work is required and in particular that there is a pressing need from authorities for advice on the staffing issues which they need to consider. There is a need also for the preparation of advice for local authorities on individual staffing issues, some of which are very complex. I therefore intend to establish the staff commission in shadow form before the Bill receives Royal Assent.

It is also my intention formally to designate the existing chairman and members of the staff advisory committee as a shadow staff commission. The shadow commission will continue the excellent work begun by the advisory committee as well as advising local authorities and making preparations for the establishment of the full commission following Royal Assent.

Parliamentary approval for this expenditure was sought in the 1994-95 main estimates for housing and environmental services Scotland vote, class XIV, vote 7. This expenditure was subject to the passage of both the Appropriation Act and the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. Pending Royal Assent of both Bills urgent expenditure estimated at £150,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Inquiry Reporter

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of appeals to the Scottish Office inquiry reporter is initiated by industry;

(2) how long it takes on average for the Scottish Office inquiry reporter to notify him of his decision;

(3) what percentage of appeals to the Scottish Office inquiry reporter are initiated by private citizens.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the allocated budget for the environmentally sensitive area schemes in Scotland for each year since 1989.

Mr. Lang: The information is given in the following table:

Financial year	*Approved estimate £ million*
1989-90	1·000
1990-91	1·150
1991-92	1·500
1992-93	3·905
1993-94	5·283
1994-95	4·500

Burley Healthcare

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Ayrshire and Arran health board has now concluded a contract with Burley Healthcare.

Mr. Stewart: Ayrshire and Arran health board and Speciality Care plc, previously known as Burley Healthcare plc, are currently in the process of finalising a legal contract for care provision.

Consultants

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines are currently in operation by his Department relating to the employment of public sector bodies by consultancy firms.

Mr. Lang: There are no guidelines on the employment of public sector bodies by consultancy firms.

Sheep Quotas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about outstanding sheep quota applications to the national reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department met recently with the National Farmers Union of Scotland to discuss the allocation of sheep annual premium quota to those producers who had applied to categories 3 to 7 of the 1993 national reserve. Allocations to category 1 and 2 producers have already been made in full.

The Department received over 1,800 applications of which 1,600 were applications to categories 3 to 7. A large number of these applications did not contain the documentation necessary to support the claims and the Department wrote to the producers concerned giving them an additional period of time to provide this documentation. Provided these producers respond timeously to the Department's request it is anticipated that producers will receive notification of the quota allocations during September 1994.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider a partial sheep quota allocation and partial payment to those sheep producers with outstanding applications to the national reserve.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* I have considered the possibility of making partial allocations of sheep annual premium quota from the 1993 national reserve to allow partial payments of premium to be made. With more than half the applicants to the reserve still having to establish the validity of their claims it is impossible to estimate whether allocations will have to be scaled back and if so, what that scaling factor will be. Any partial allocations at this stage would therefore have to be very small, and since we currently expect to make the final allocations in two months' time I do not propose to make this additional step, which could in fact delay those final allocations.

Nurse Training and Education

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a breakdown of the spending on nurse education and training for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 identifying the spending allocated to *(a)* pre-registration education, *(b)* post-registration education and *(c)* nurse teacher training and support.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 July 1994]:* The following table sets out the funding of pre-registration nursing and midwifery education and training and of teacher training and support for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94. Funding of post-registration education is not identifiable separately.

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Pre-registration funding	22,876	24,012	26,350	26,370
Funding of teacher training and support	1,331	1,786	1,330	950

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Police Access to Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many subject access requests were received by his Department involving access to national insurance records in the last year; how many subject access requests were received by each Scottish police force in the last year; what estimate he has as to the percentage of those requests which were enforced subject access requests; and if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards enforced subject access.

Prisons

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the prisons that had surplus cell capacity as of 30 June; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James-Douglas Hamilton: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 20 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the prisons that had surplus cell capacity as of 30 June.

During any year a number of cells are unavailable for use for a variety of reasons, including redecoration or damage repair work, refurbishment (including in some cases, to provide night sanitation) or for other policy reasons (e.g., being retained in the event of an emergency). Against this background the information you requested—reflecting the position as at Friday 1 July—is set out in the attached table.

(1) Establishment	*(2) Design capacity*	*(3) Cells available for use*	*(4) Prisoner population*	*(5) Cells not in use (3) (4)*
Aberdeen	142	136	183	6
Barlinnie	939	861	1,154	78
Castle Huntly	144	144	64	—
Dumfries	139	129	125	10
Dungavel	135	135	120	—
Edinburgh	508	506	631	2
Friarton	56	56	77	—
Glenochil	668	538	517	131
Greenock	172	172	281	—
Inverness	79	68	99	11
Longriggend	177	177	198	—
Low Moss	396	396	394	—
Noranside	137	137	125	—
Penninghame	85	81	54	4
Perth	426	408	465	18
Peterhead	271	209	210	62
Polmont	414	366	374	48
Shotts	535	490	460	45
Cornton Vale	312	179	188	34
Totals	5,637	5,188	5,719	449

PRIME MINISTER

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* his policies and *(b)* his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

The Prime Minister: The Government continue to help small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and, when appropriate, through specific programmes of support and assistance. The recently published White Paper on competitiveness has clear implications for small firms and will encourage the growth of the sector through a series of well targeted initiatives.

Specific measures to assist small firms are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends, the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales. For details of specific programmes, I refer my hon. Friend to their replies today.

War Widows

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions over the past two years a Minister has met representatives of the War Widows' Association in order to discuss the needs and interests of war widows.

The Prime Minister: Over the past two years the Minister with special responsibility for war pensions, my hon. and noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Social Security, has met formally with representatives of the War Widows' Association of Great Britain at four meetings of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions; he also met a deputation from the association on 12 April 1994. He has also discussed with representatives of war pensions committees—which may include members of the War Widows' Association—matters concerning the needs and interests of war widows; over the past two years there have been nine such occasions.

Military Medals

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *361*, if he will reconsider his policy on whether a medal should be issued specifically for those who did national service.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to institute an award specifically for those who served a period of national service in the armed forces. They were eligible for the range of official awards approved by the sovereign at the time.

Ex-service Men and Women

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister when he intends to meet representatives of the Royal British Legion to discuss the implications of the resolution passed by the House of Commons on 1 July that called for the appointment of a Minister for ex-service men and women; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have of course noted the resolution passed on 1 July, but I must draw the hon. Member's attention to the remarks made in the House by my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, on 19 July, *Official Report*, columns *163-64*. The services that ex-service men and women require are varied and are

the responsibility of more than one Government Department. Ministers from those Departments can and do meet representatives of veterans' organisations, and I am sure that those arrangements will continue. I do not believe that the interests of veterans would be well served by the creation of an additional tier of bureaucracy in the form of a Ministry for Veterans' Affairs.

I have received a request to meet representatives from the Royal British Legion, which I am currently considering.

Proscripted Organisations

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to extend the proscription of the Ulster Defence Association to Great Britain and to the Ulster Young Militants in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The Ulster Defence Association, like a number of other terrorist groups, is proscribed in Northern Ireland where it operates. The situation in Great Britain is kept under review. It should be remembered, however, that as a proscribed organisation in Northern Ireland the UDA already comes within the financial provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, and that it is therefore an offence to contribute funds to the UDA in Great Britain, as well as in Northern Ireland.

The question of the proscription of the Ulster Young Militants is also kept under review, as explained by my right hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, in his answer of 16 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *706*.

Lloyd's

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister, what revisions have been made to the guidance in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" in the light of the introduction of members' agent pooling arrangements in Lloyd's

The Prime Minister: The relevant paragraphs in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" dealing with membership of Lloyd's have been revised to take account of recent developments in the way in which Lloyd's business is conducted, including the introduction of members agent pooling arrangements. The Secretary to the Cabinet circulated them to all Ministers on 5 July. The revised paragraphs, replacing paragraphs 118-123 of the latest version of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", which I published on 19 May 1992, are as follows:

"Membership of Lloyd's

118. A Minister holding office as Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer or as President of the Board of Trade (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry), or a Minister holding office as a Minister in the Treasury who is responsible under the Chancellor of the Exchequer for taxation matters relating specifically to Lloyd's, or as a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry responsible under the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for insurance matters relating specifically to Lloyd's, should not become an underwriting member of Lloyd's. Such a Minister, if already a member of Lloyd's on appointment, should cease underwriting during tenure of that office.

119. Apart from those Ministers covered by the specific requirements of paragraph 118 above, any Minister who is an underwriting member of Lloyd's should not take an active part in the management of the affairs of syndicates of which he/she is a member, and should on appointment as a Minister withdraw from any such active participation in management. Ministers who are underwriting members of Lloyd's should arrange their syndicate participation solely through a Members Agent Pooling Arrangement. This requirement will operate from the 1995 year of account, or from the first year of account after appointment for newly appointed Ministers, subject to time being available for the procedures for joining a MAPA.

120. No Minister who is a current underwriting member of Lloyd's should take part in any departmental or collective discussions or decisions affecting Lloyd's whether directly or indirectly (e.g., the Secretary of State for Transport in relation to questions concerning marine, aviation and transport insurance, the Secretary of State for Employment on questions concerning employers' liability insurance, Treasury Ministers on tax issues affecting Lloyd's).

121. Some Ministers have ceased underwriting but still have open syndicate commitments in respect of past membership. Such Ministers should take no part in those departmental or collective discussions or decisions affecting Lloyd's (whether directly or indirectly) if their continuing benefits or liabilities in respect of the period before cessation might thereby be affected, and might therefore make them vulnerable to reasonable suspicion of exerting or being in a position of undue influence.

122. A Law Officer who is an underwriting member of Lloyd's, or who still has open syndicate commitments in respect of past membership, should not tender advice on the formulation, application or enforcement of legislation relating to Lloyd's, or take part in any collective discussion or decision on any matters affecting Lloyd's and should, as far as is practicable, avoid taking enforcement decisions relating to Lloyd's.

123. A Minister in whom powers under legislation relating to Lloyd's are vested should not delegate the exercise of those powers to any other Minister who is an underwriting member of Lloyd's or who still has open syndicate commitments in respect of past underwriting.

123A. Every Minister is required, on appointment to a first Ministerial office, to obtain the Prime Minister's permission before continuing a connection with Lloyd's, however nominal. Any Minister wishing to establish or re-establish any such connection during his term of appointment should likewise obtain the Prime Minister's permission to do so. Before granting permission, the Prime Minister will need to be satisfied that the conditions indicated above will be met.

123B. In addition, the Secretary of the Cabinet is required to keep a list of Ministers who are members of Lloyd's. He will ask all Ministers on appointment for the first time to Ministerial office whether they are a member of Lloyd's and if so whether they propose to continue or suspend underwriting while they hold that office. He will also ask those Ministers who are members of Lloyd's and who are appointed to a subsequent Ministerial office whether they propose to continue or suspend underwriting while they hold that office.

123C. Where a Minister has a shareholding in an investment trust or any other entity which holds a corporate membership of Lloyd's, that shareholding should be treated on the same basis as any other by a Minister (see paras 109-117 of the May 1992 issue of QPM)."

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how many special advisers have *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* The figures requested are as follows:

	Year	Special Advisers
(a)	1989	2
	1990	3
	1991	4
	1992	5
	1993	0
	[1]1994	1
(b)	1989	2
	1990	6
	1991	1
	1992	4
	1993	2
	[1]1994	1

[1] To date.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years became *(a)* management consultants and *(b)* joined a firm of consultants;

(2) if he will publish the names of the employers joined by special advisers who left his Department in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* There is no requirement for special advisers to provide details of their employers on leaving Government service, or thereafter.

Electricity Companies

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Prime Minister what role his Office has played in negotiations over pay rises, share options and pension rights for the senior staff of electricity companies; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 July 1994]:* None.

DEFENCE

Military Criminal Justice

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many district courts martial there were in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The number of district courts martial convened in the Army and RAF in 1991, 1992 and 1993 is as follows:

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Army	716	664	630
RAF	140	131	123

The Navy do not hold district courts martial, but rather give commanding officers greater powers of punishment than their Army and RAF counterparts.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made for soldiers posted abroad to have access to legal advice when an accused is questioned by the military police.

Mr. Soames: In overseas commands, arrangements are made for suspects to be advised by service lawyers. Where no service lawyer is available to give advice, the suspect is allowed to make a free telephone call to a lawyer in the United Kingdom. In rare circumstances—due to geographical location, the availability of a legal adviser or time, for example—it will not be possible for a suspect either to consult a legal adviser or to have one present at an interview.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review the military criminal justice system.

Mr. Soames: The services' system of discipline and criminal justice is governed by the Service Discipline Acts. The main purpose of the quinquennial Armed Forces Bills is to give authority, when they are enacted, for the Services Discipline Acts to continue in force for a further five years, but they are also an opportunity to review the Services Discipline Acts. The next Armed Forces Bill is due to be introduced in the 1995-96 Session.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in how many courts martial cases the accused pleaded guilty in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Soames: In 1991, about 675 guilty pleas were made at courts martial, across the three services, and 650 in 1992. Figures are not yet available for 1993.

Mr. Gerald James

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what grounds the documents and diaries of Mr. Gerald James, the former chairman of the British Manufacturing and Research Company, were taken by the Ministry of Defence police; what information of relevance was gleaned from them; when they will all be returned to him; and if he will make a sttement.

Mr. Soames: In April 1990 as part of a wide-ranging MOD police corruption investigation, the BMARC premises at Grantham were searched with the consent of the managing director of Astra Holdings, the parent company of BMARC. At the time of this search, Mr. James had ceased to be employed by BMARC/Astra Holdings.

Documents were found in the office that Mr. James had previously occupied. These were handed over to MOD police by the financial director of the company. On examination, they were considered to be relevant to the police inquiries. In 1993 at the conclusion of all aspects of the MOD investigation, the documents were returned to Astra Holdings' officially appointed receiver, Cork Gully.

These documents were considered to be company documents and at no time were any documents taken into police possession directly from Mr. James.

Navy, Army and Air Force Institute

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the privatisation of the NAAFI; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: No representations have been received about the privatisation of NAAFI. The way in which the organisation operates is intimately linked to the services, particularly in war, and offers advantages to the armed forces which could not be readily provided by a private sector company.

Cadet Forces

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* private and *(b)* state-funded schools have cadet forces; and how many of these cadets forces are linked to (i) the Royal Navy, (ii) the Army and (iii) the Royal Air Force; how many pupils in (1) private and (2) state-funded schools are enrolled in cadet forces for each of the armed services; and how much the cadet forces in (x) private and (y) state-funded schools for each service cost his Department annually.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Imphal Barracks

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to identify a future MoD use for the offices at Imphal barracks, York, which are due to become vacant in mid-1996 when York-based army manning and records staff transfer to Kentigern House in Glasgow; and how he intends to consult *(a)* York city council and *(b)* the trade unions representing MoD civilian staff over future uses for these offices.

Mr. Soames: The office accommodation to be vacated is situated within Imphal barracks, and cannot be leased or disposed of. In accordance with our normal procedures we are looking for alternative defence uses for the accommodation; this work is still ongoing.

If a defence use for the accommodation is found York city council will be notified. The city council would be consulted if we were proposing a material change of use or some form of development.

If any alternative defence use affects MoD civilians then the proposal would be the subject of consultations with the trade unions in the normal way.

Royal Air Force

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the RAF squadrons and units that have been disbanded or reorganised in the last five years indicating *(a)* the broad nature of the work of the squadron or unit, *(b)* the date of the change, *(c)* whether the squadron or unit was subject to market testing and *(d)* whether any of the duties have been taken over by contractors; and if he will name the contractors in each applicable case.

Mr. Soames: The information required is not held centrally, nor in the form requested, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the RAF squadrons and units which are currently or will as a result of the defence costs study be subject to *(a)* market testing or *(b)* contractorisation; and if he will indicate the broad nature of the work of the squadron or unit.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

University Air Squadrons

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many university air squadrons there are; what they cost to run per year; how may university students were attached to them in each of the last five years; and how many of these students entered service with the RAF on completion of their courses in each of the last three years.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Property Sales

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of Defence how many service properties that were owned by his Department have been sold in each of the last five years; and what was the yearly revenue received from these sales.

Mr. Soames: The term "service properties" is taken to mean land, buildings and residential dwellings. Details of the number of service properties sold are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

The receipts received from the sale of service properties in each of the last five financial years are set out in the table:

Financial Year	*Residential Dwellings*[1] £	*Land/ Buildings* £	*Total* £
1989-90	48,000,000	23,200,000	71,200,000
1990-91	46,000,000	34,600,000	80,600,000
1991-92	54,000,000	48,300,000	102,300,000
1992-93	42,000,000	26,200,000	68,200,000
1993-94	29,300,000	41,400,000	70,700,000

[1] Married quarters and civilian houses.

Peacekeeping Manual

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 10 February, *Official Report,* column *484,* 4 March, *Official Report,* column *941,* and 24 June, *Official Report,* columns *388-89* whether, account was taken in drawing up the two NATO documents on peacekeeping, of the advice received by his Department from the academic bodies consulted in the preparation of the United Kingdom manual on peacekeeping;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 4 March, *Official Report,* column *941,* if he will list all the academic bodies consulted in the course of preparing the new United Kingdom manual on peacekeeping.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all sites within his Department where luminising operations have been or are carried out; what sums are required for containment or decontamination of wastes arising; what criteria govern the inclusion of such sites within the national radioactive waste inventory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: As part of a review of its procedures for dealing with instances of land contamination on the defence estate, my Department is in the process of identifying sites where radium luminising work has been undertaken in the past and establishing the extent of decontamination work undertaken after luminising work was discontinued. It is too early to say what further containment or decontamination work may subsequently be required at such sites. In completing the national radioactive waste inventory, my Department acts in accordance with the guidance notes which require details of any waste allocated either for disposal to the BNFL land burial site at Drigg or for storage pending the availability of a national deep underground repository.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the scale of alcohol abuse in the armed services.

Mr. Soames: Alcohol abuse in the armed forces is taken very seriously and considerable effort is put into dealing with alcohol-related problems. A comprehensive system of education and treatment has been developed

throughout the services. In addition to the collation of disciplinary data in respect of alcohol-related offences, numbers of alcohol dependence/chronic alcoholism cases are also monitored. There were 272 such cases in 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, compared with 369 cases in 1988. These represent 0·09 per cent. and 0·11 per cent. of service strength respectively.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men and women were court martialled for drink-related offences in each of the three armed services in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of service men and women convicted of drink-related offences at courts martial in the five years up to 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, are as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Royal Navy					
Males	9	13	5	7	7
Females	—	—	—	—	—
Army					
Males	20	22	12	14	10
Females	—	—	—	—	—
Royal Air Force					
Males	20	10	10	13	6
Females	—	1	1	—	—

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual expenditure in each year since 1989 of the Royal Navy, Army and RAF on alcohol abuse programmes expressed in constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Soames: Each of the services offers a comprehensive education programme to combat alcohol abuse plus treatment for alcohol dependency. Details of the costs involved are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Air Collision

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to publish the MoD board of inquiry findings into the reasons for the fatal collision between an RAF jet and civilian helicopter on on 23 June 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The summary of the RAF board of inquiry into this accident will be published shortly and copies placed in the Libraries of the House. In the meantime, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), *Official Report*, column *264*.

Civil Servants (Business Interests)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the rules in the Department's defence services section governing the interests or involvement of civil servants in private businesses related to the work and activities of his Department; and what information he has on such interests held by the current head of the defence services section.

Mr. Freeman: Officials must not put themselves in a position where their duty and their private interests conflict: they must not make use of their official position to further their private interests, or lay themselves open to suspicion of dishonesty. Responsibility for monitoring compliance with these regulations rests with line management. No central records are held.

Territorial Army (Consultants)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the consultants he has appointed to help recruitment to the Territorial Army with details of their terms of reference and the total cost to his Department.

Mr. Soames: My Department has not appointed any consultants to help recruitment to the Territorial Army. The advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi was, however, awarded the single Army national advertising account in March 1994 and this includes national Territorial Army recruiting advertising.

War Widows

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations the Government have received from the War Widows Association in respect of widows whose husbands fought in conflicts before 1974, and who have recently been widowed, about their difficulty in demonstrating for pension purposes that their late husband's deaths were due wholly, or in part, to their spouses' service in the armed forces.

Mr. Soames: My Department receives representations from the War Widows Association from time to time. We have not, however, recently received any concerning the demonstration that a service man's death was attributable to his service in respect of forces family pensions under the armed forces pension scheme, although such representations may have been received by the Department of Social Security which administers the war pensions scheme.

RN Engineering College, Plymouth

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider giving 12 months notice of redundancy to all non-mobile grades of civilian employees at the Royal Naval engineering college, Manadon, Plymouth.

Mr. Soames: My Department gives staff under notice of redundancy at least the minimum period, usually six months, stipulated in the staff regulations which have been agreed with the trades unions. It is our practice, however, to give more notice wherever practicable.

Official Service Residences

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, columns *62-64* if he will identify the county in which each of the numbered residences is situated and the rank of the officer in residence.

Mr. Soames: The county, or country where the residence is overseas, in which each of the numbered residences is situated and the rank of the officer in residence is shown in the table.

Residence	*Location*	*Rank*
1	London	Admiral
2	London	Vacant
3	London	Rear Admiral
4	London	Rear Admiral
5	Middlesex	Admiral
6	Middlesex	Vice Admiral
7	Middlesex	Rear Admiral
8	Middlesex	Rear Admiral
9	Hampshire	Admiral
10	Hampshire	Rear Admiral
11	Hampshire	Rear Admiral
12	Hampshire	Vice Admiral
13	Hampshire	Lieutenant General
14	Hampshire	Surgeon Rear Admiral
15	Hampshire	Surgeon Rear Admiral
16	Hampshire	Commodore
17	Dorset	Rear Admiral
18	Somerset	Rear Admiral
19	Devon	Vice Admiral
20	Devon	Captain
21	Devon	Rear Admiral
22	Devon	Commodore
23	Devon	Captain
24	Fife	Vice Admiral
25	Fife	Commodore
26	Strathclyde	Commodore
27	Gibraltar	Rear Admiral
28	USA	Vice Admiral
29	London	Field Marshal
30	London	Air Chief Marshal
31	London	General
32	London	General
33	London	General
34	London	Lieutenant General
35	London	Major General
36	London	Major General
37	Hampshire	Lieutenant General
38	Surrey	Major General
39	Surrey	Major General
40	Wiltshire	Major General
41	Wiltshire	Major General
42	Wiltshire	Lieutenant General
43	Wiltshire	General
44	Wiltshire	Major General
45	Wiltshire	Lieutenant General
46	Lothian	Major General
47	Northern Ireland	Lieutenant General
48	Kent	Brigadier
49	Yorkshire	Major General
50	Hampshire	General
51	Shropshire	Major General
52	Germany	Lieutenant General
53	Germany	Major General
54	Belgium	General
55	Belgium	Field Marshal
56	Hong Kong	Major General
57	Cyprus	Major General
58	London	Admiral
59	Buckinghamshire	Air Chief Marshal
60	Buckinghamshire	Air Chief Marshal
61	Buckinghamshire	Air Marshal
62	Buckinghamshire	Air Vice Marshal
63	Buckinghamshire	Air Vice Marshal
64	Oxfordshire	Air Vice Marshal
65	Middlesex	Air Vice Marshal
66	Middlesex	Air Marshal
67	Cambridgeshire	Air Chief Marshal
68	Cambridgeshire	Air Marshal
69	Cambridgeshire	Air Vice Marshal
70	Hertfordshire	Air Vice Marshal

Residence	Location	Rank
71	Gloucestershire	Air Chief Marshal
72	Gloucestershire	Air Vice Marshal
73	Fife	Air Commodore
74	Berkshire	Air Vice Marshal
75	Lincolnshire	Air Vice Marshal
76	Germany	Air Vice Marshal
77	Holland	Air Chief Marshal

Minx Programme

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what developments and for what reasons have taken place in the Minx programme; and which companies were involved in it.

Mr. Freeman: In 1991 industry conducted feasibility studies against a cardinal point specification for MINX to inform decisions about our future procurement strategy. The companies involved were Royal Ordnance, Huntings and Ferranti.

Royal Marines School of Music

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what covenants he has prepared relating to the upkeep of the listed buildings on the site of the Royal Marines school of music at Deal in the event of the sale of the site; and what effect the inclusion of the listed buildings is likely to have on the value of the site as a whole for private sector development.

Mr. Soames: As no decision has been made to sell the site at Deal, the question of preparing covenants relating to the upkeep of listed buildings has not arisen. The impact that listed buildings may have on the value of the site, should it be disposed of, will depend on the nature of any proposed future use, which would be considered under the normal planning and listed building processes.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 19 July, if he will commission an independent study by a firm of chartered accountant and management consultants of the commercially confidential and operationally secret material relating to his proposals for the Royal Marines school of music, Deal; if he will include in the consultative document a summary of their assessment; and if he will allow suitably qualified consultants representing local interests access to the relevant material and the defence cost study;

(2) if he will explain the different methods of setting out the cost of training of Royal Marines bandsmen used in the Minister of State's answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column 64, and his oral statement of 14 July, *Official Report*, column 1171, and if he will set out a reconciliaton of the two different amounts on the basis of *(a)* annual costs and *(b)* total training period costs;

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the market for military land and buildings in *(a)* Uxbridge, *(b)* Twickenham and *(c)* Deal;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 19 July, if he will list the names and addresses of the principal contractors and sub-contractors used of maintenance by the Royal Marines school of music at Deal; and if he will estimate the contribution to the local economy of the annual spending on maintenance at the school of music;

(5) pursuant to his answer of 19 July, if he will make a statement on the reason for the level of expenditure on maintenance at the Royal Marines school of music at Deal; if he will provide an indication of the main heads of expenditure under this item each year; what assessment he has made of the value for money of this expenditure; and if he will publish figures for Uxbridge and Kneller Hall as a comparable basis to those given for Deal.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Dundrennan Test Range

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications in regard to *(a)* future employment, *(b)* environmental restoration from contamination arising from testing activities and *(c)* the electromagnetic rail upon research, development demonstration programme of his oral announcement on 14 July of the closure of the Dundrennan test range at Kirkcudbright, *Official Report*, column 172.

Mr. Freeman: The test and evaluation establishment Kirkcudbright currently employs 31 MOD civilians and about 100 contractors staff. The electro-magnetic launcher facility, which is operated by the Defence Research Agency, is not affected by the proposed closure and up to 25 people would need to be retained—primarily to maintain range security and safety—for as long as the DRA require the facility. As far as restoration from contamination is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), *Official Report*, 15 July, column *818*.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy routinely to place in the Library copies of all speeches he, or other Ministers in his Department, make on matters for which they have departmental responsibility in the period 21 July to 16 October.

Mr. Soames: Arrangements will be made for copies of speeches made by Ministers in my Department in a public forum, which make policy statements, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mergers

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his policy to refer mergers between major United Kingdom defence contractors and foreign-owned or based companies to *(a)* the Prime Minister, *(b)* the Secret Intelligence Service, *(c)* the Security Service and *(d)* the Cabinet Office; and who formally sanctions such a merger.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is consulted by the appropriate regulatory authorities in cases likely to involve

the interests of the MOD and provides advice on how these would be affected by a proposed merger. The security implications of proposed mergers are considered and other authorities consulted as necessary.

Biological and Toxic Weapons Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals Her Majesty's Government intend to submit to the special conference on biological and toxic weapons in Geneva in September; and if he will place any non-confidential papers put to and circulated at the conference in the Library.

Mr. Soames: We will be proposing at the special conference that states parties to the biological and toxin weapons convention work to strengthen the convention through the creation of an effective verification regime and, to this end, that the special conference agrees a mandate for a group of experts to draft a verification protocol for the BWC. We will further be proposing that this work be completed in time for the 1996 fourth BWC review conference. Copies of papers from the special conference will be placed in the Library of the House.

Recruits

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many new recruits have been taken on by each of the armed forces in the past five years.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to table 2 of "Tri-Service Personnel Statistics 1—Strengths, Intake and Outflow of UK Regular Forces," a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Redundancies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancies there have been in each of the armed forces in the past five years.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Operation Snowdrop

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the method of aerial delivery of relief supplies known as Operation Snowdrop.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Land Mines

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if United Kingdom arms manufacturers continue to possess the capacity for production and development of land mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The current edition of the defence manufacturers handbook lists the following companies with mines among their products: British Aerospace Defence, British Aerospace, Royal Ordnance, Hunting Engineering and Plalite.

Porton Down

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) on 24 June, *Official Report*, column 372, if it is his practice to ensure that service personnel with allergic reactions or histories are identified prior to the offer or administration of counter-CBW medical preparations.

Mr. Soames: It is standard medical practice to ensure that vaccines, whether against biological warfare or natural diseases, are withheld if individual recipients display contraindications, such as a history of severe allergic reaction to the vaccines concerned.

In the case of the nerve agent pretreatment set tablets taken against the threat of chemical attack, no medical evidence has been found, in over 40 years of therapeutic usage, that the active ingredient—pyridostigmine bromide—can cause allergic reactions.

Naval Ship Contracts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the naval ship contracts on which claims for price and cost adjustments are still outstanding; and what is the maximum sum of liabilities arising from such price and cost adjustments.

Mr. Freeman: All MOD contracts, whether for ship platforms, systems, equipments or weapon systems, provide for price adjustment. Each claim for price adjustment is assessed on its merits and no maximum can be set. Details of claims are commercially confidential to the companies concerned.

Ballistic Missile Defence System

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has let a contract for study of a ballistic missile defence system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The UK ballistic missile defence pre-feasibility study is the subject of a competitive tendering exercise. Tenders were received on 23 June 1994 from two consortia led by British Aerospace plc and Logica UK Ltd. and these are currently being assessed. It is intended that the contract award will be announced in the autumn.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many veterans of Britain's nuclear tests have been contacted by the NRPB in carrying out its investigations into illnesses subsequently contacted by participants in the tests.

Mr. Soames: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 26 May, *Official Report*, column *231*.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what illnesses the National Radiological Protection Board has considered in respect of participants in British nuclear tests; and what plans there are to extend the range.

Mr. Soames: The illnesses considered by the NRPB in the compilation of its study are shown on table 6.11 of the report (R.266), a copy of which can be found in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many veterans of the British nuclear tests

have been awarded a war pension in each year since the first case associated with the tests was diagnosed; and how many applications have been rejected.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.
I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received from the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association; and what has been his response.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of defence expenditure was accounted for by nuclear weapons *(a)* before and *(b)* after the recent round of defence cuts.

Mr. Soames' I will write to the hon. Member.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Soames: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994, Ministers in my Department made 27 overseas trips in their official capacity. Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year to 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

European Parliament (Pensions and Life Assurance)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Lord President of the Council what life insurance payments and pension are available to members of the European Parliament that are not available to Members of this House; and how they are financed.

Mr. Newton: There are no arrangements or benefits made by the Government for Members of the European Parliament which are not made in parallel for Members of Parliament. There is, however, a scheme of additional voluntary contributions run by a non-profit making organisation set up by Members of the European Parliament, to which the Parliament contributes two thirds of the contributions in respect of those Members who subscribe to it. There is also a limited life assurance scheme run by the European Parliament for its Members with a maximum benefit of about £12,500 payable on death or on the attainment of 60 years of age, provided that the policy has been in place for at least 10 years.

Drugs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council, if the group studying solutions for the drugs problem is free to recommend decriminalising cannabis.

Mr. Newton: The central drugs co-ordination unit's remit is to ensure that departmental policies on drug misuse are planned, developed and implemented within a clear strategic framework and to devise an effective basis for local co-ordination of action against the drugs problem. Individual Government Departments remain responsible for their own policies to tackle drug misuse. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already made it clear that the Government have no intention of decriminalising or legalising any currently banned drug.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council, when he expects the group in his Department studying drugs to present the report.

Mr. Newton: The Government expect to publish in the autumn, a consultative document which will set out a strategic framework for tackling drug misuses in England.

Early-day Motions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council, what plans there are to reform the early-day motion procedure.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so. The hon. Member may, however, wish to raise the matter with the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council, what is the percentage of early-day motions initiated by Opposition Members during the present parliamentary session.

Mr. Newton: Hon. Members other than Conservative party members tabled 88·6 per cent. of the early-day motions tabled in the current Session up to and including Wednesday 6 July.

	Number
Labour	1,102
Conservative	166
Liberal Democrats	125
Plaid Cymru	34
Scottish National Party	18
Others	15
Total	1,460

This answer is based on motions only, not amendments, and is based on the records in POLIS.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the current average cost of an early-day motion.

Mr. Newton: The total costs associated with the tabling of the 1,769 early-day motions in 1993 was £2,290,000 giving an average of £1,295 each.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council, what is the current average number of hon. Members who append their signature to early-day motions.

Mr. Newton: The average number of signatures appended to early-day motions and amendments to them in the current Session up to and including Wednesday 6 July was 41·6

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the provisional percentage figure for each local education authority of relevant central spending in financial year 1994-95 in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector which will form the basis of the financial addition for grant-maintained schools in 1995-96.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department will be consulting later this year on the arrangements for funding GM schools in 1995-96 on the basis of the local management of schools scheme of the relevant authority.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the planned capital expenditure on grant-maintained schools for the financial years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97; what was the actual capital expenditure on grant-maintained schools in 1993-94; and if he will give for each year the assured number of grant-maintained schools on which the capital expenditure levels were based.

Mr. Robin Squire: Self-governing schools' capital outturn expenditure for 1993-94 was £87,348,570. Planned capital expenditure on self-governing schools for the financial years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 is as follows:

£ million

1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
115	251	358

These figures are published in the Department's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library. They reflect the additional responsibilities of GM schools and our commitment to setting them up on a sound basis. Our expenditure plans provide for the growth of the GM sector to be maintained.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *752*, if he will identify those schools which provided information on grant-maintained status which was the subject of complaints to his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has received a total of 16 complaints since January 1993 about the accuracy of information disseminated by governing bodies prior to their schools' ballots on the question of grant-maintained status. The schools concerned are as follows:

Hanson School, Bradford
Peel Brow County Primary School, Bury
Soham Village College, Cambridgeshire
Addey and Stanhope School, Lewisham
Winterton Comprehensive School, Humberside
West Mersea County Primary School, Essex
St. Peter's CE Primary School, Lancashire
Tudor Grange School, Solihull
Cardinal Newman School, Bedfordshire
Anglesey Primary School, Staffordshire
Chatham House School, Kent
Christ Church Middle School, Staffordshire
Greenway School, West Sussex
Padstow School, Nottinghamshire
Prospect School, Berkshire
King David Primary School, Liverpool

All complaints are considered carefully and, where appropriate, follow-up action is taken by the Department.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the latest figures for each local education authority and the estimated figures in September 1994 of the number of pupils in *(a)* local education authority maintained and *(b)* grant-maintained schools in (i) the primary and (ii) the secondary schools sector; and if he will give the national totals in each sector.

Mr. Robin Squire: Estimates of pupil numbers related to the 930 primary and secondary schools which are currently grant-maintained are shown in the table. These estimates are derived from the Department's January 1993 schools census. The table also shows estimates of pupil numbers including 57 schools which by 20 July had been approved or approved in principle for grant-maintained status from 1 September. Applications for grant-maintained status from 43 more schools are currently being considered by my right hon. Friend.

Estimated numbers of pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools in September 1994
(figures in brackets include schools approved or approved in principle for GM status by 14 July 1994)

LEA Area	*LEA Primary*		*GM Primary*		*LEA Secondary*		*GM Secondary*	
Corporation of London	214		0		0		0	
Camden	10,610		0		8,139		2,340	
Greenwich	20,664		239		13,956		0	
Hackney	16,590		87		7,384		0	
Hammersmith	9,025		0		4,747		1,229	
Islington	14,966		0		7,037		0	
Kensington and Chelsea	5,762		530		2,574		629	
Lambeth	17,716	(17,266)	1,250	(1,700)	2,987		3,363	
Lewisham	20,073		361		10,515		0	
Southwark	19,917		1,265		6,356		2,765	
Tower Hamlets	20,717		0		10,675		907	
Wandsworth	16,699		515		2,420		6,487	
Westminster	9,122		0		7,358		0	
Barking	15,727		0		9,493		0	
Barnet	23,014		776		8,580		9,836	
Bexley	17,953		643		10,810		3,581	
Brent	21,166		1,002		3,010		9,377	
Bromley	19,298	(18,362)	1,151	(2,087)	5,346		11,342	
Croydon	25,383	(24,956)	836	(1,263)	8,664	(6,967)	5,897	(7,594)

LEA Area	LEA Primary		GM Primary		LEA Secondary		GM Secondary	
Ealing	26,313		1,217		6,093		4,905	
Enfield	23,167		149		11,814		5,576	
Haringey	19,127		0		9,060		0	
Harrow	19,109		0		7,482		483	
Havering	19,624		0		11,012		3,813	
Hillingdon	17,027		2,602		2,248		11,467	
Hounslow	19,339		0		11,902		2,108	
Kingston upon Thames	10,215		191		4,748		2,859	
Merton	15,224		0		7,167		0	
Newham	25,235		0		13,019		556	
Redbridge	19,045		0		13,839		1,113	
Richmond upon Thames	10,785		0		7,447		0	
Sutton	12,033		799		4,474		6,591	
Waltham Forest	19,705		0		9,134		1,915	
Birmingham	105,289		1,717		48,934		14,621	
Coventry	29,692		0		18,677		0	
Dudley	27,570		381		13,076		4,458	
Sandwell	31,937		0		17,346	(16,396)	658	(1,608)
Solihull	19,215		454		13,080		0	
Walsall	27,590		561		13,635	(12,377)	5,557	(6,815)
Wolverhampton	25,393		0		13,427		2,348	
Knowsley	18,647		0		8,241		719	
Liverpool	50,716		0		27,423		2,260	
St. Helens	17,584		0		11,568		0	
Sefton	27,066		0		18,583		0	
Wirral	31,344		0		18,690		2,031	
Bolton	26,811		364		13,878		2,755	
Bury	16,664		223		9,967		0	
Manchester	46,948		0		21,376		0	
Oldham	24,542		0		15,930		0	
Rochdale	20,131	(19,892)	1,115	(1,354)	11,681		1,053	
Salford	22,896		0		11,011		413	
Stockport	25,180		0		14,819		0	
Tameside	22,934		0		10,517		2,332	
Trafford	20,091		0		8,490		2,892	
Wigan	29,727		0		19,120		0	
Barnsley	21,460		0		12,362		0	
Doncaster	29,357		0		21,310		0	
Rotherham	24,694		0		17,616		0	
Sheffield	42,764	(42,434)	943	(1,273)	24,802		1,893	
Bradford	39,996	(39,103)	539	(1,432)	40,586		5,080	
Calderdale	19,059		660		6,795		6,337	
Kirklees	35,978		0		23,730		1,266	
Leeds	65,098		51		43,268		1,138	
Wakefield	29,434		0		20,403		0	
Gateshead	18,353		0		11,612		0	
Newcastle upon Tyne	22,545		0		16,598		0	
North Tyneside	16,346		0		14,175		212	
South Tyneside	15,586		0		9,333		0	
Sunderland	29,889		0		18,971		0	
Isle of Wight	174		0		10,294		0	
Avon	79,059		0		52,377		1,569	
Bedfordshire	41,430		629		32,245		8,568	
Berkshire	58,242		2,242		38,909		7,389	
Buckinghamshire	59,320	(58,976)	2,126	(2,470)	26,167		9,844	
Cambridgeshire	56,515		1,911		25,138		15,109	
Cheshire	88,276		418		60,415		2,395	
Cleveland	65,058		0		35,650		0	
Cornwall	40,128		0		28,965		0	
Cumbria	40,211		2,399		20,085		10,617	
Derbyshire	82,261	(82,179)	1,671	(1,753)	41,786		15,275	
Devon	79,139		285		52,908		4,571	
Dorset	44,367		415		30,808		9,537	
Durham	55,779		0		37,068		0	
East Sussex	50,300		0		33,201		0	
Essex	102,914		18,774		28,269		66,322	
Gloucestershire	40,067	(39,025)	2,820	(3,862)	11,008	(10,417)	21,584	(22,175)
Hampshire	125,895		3,911		60,436		15,780	
Hereford and Worcester	47,895		0		43,288		3,558	
Hertfordshire	81,073	(80,637)	1,564	(2,000)	46,498	(44,968)	20,565	(22,095)
Humberside	84,091	(84,014)	257	(334)	55,202		0	
Isles of Scilly	7,232		0		108		0	
Kent	121,041	(119,745)	4,877	(6,173)	49,626	(47,950)	51,187	(52,863)
Lancashire	128,001	(127,770)	578	(809)	75,559		6,593	
Leicestershire	79,549		0		55,587		3,222	
Lincolnshire	42,559	(41,907)	6,219	(6,871)	20,628	(20,004)	16,323	(16,947)
Norfolk	59,402	(59,275)	2,623	(2,750)	31,573		8,608	

LEA Area	LEA Primary		GM Primary		LEA Secondary		GM Secondary	
North Yorkshire	58,165		0		43,107		0	
Northamptonshire	47,113		3,072		35,159		9,197	
Northumberland	21,566		0		28,470		632	
Nottinghamshire	91,370		0		60,776		1,831	
Oxfordshire	39,805		81		34,189		0	
Shropshire	35,103		307		20,383		4,324	
Somerset	34,969		374		27,200	(27,017)	398	(581)
Staffordshire	92,292	(92,244)	49	(97)	64,046		4,298	
Suffolk	43,420		0		47,215		0	
Surrey	72,926	(72,165)	3,546	(4,307)	28,962		9,915	
Warwickshire	45,715		0		19,988		4,669	
West Sussex	51,813	(51,420)	0	(393)	39,154		0	
Wiltshire	44,148	(43,638)	2,915	(3,425)	20,480	(20,197)	13,216	(13,499)
Total	4,077,888	4,068,614	84,684	93,958	2,366,447	2,357,655	504,258	513,050

Note: The figures for GM Primary schools exclude part-time pupils.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have applied for a change in the admissions policy giving in each case *(a)* the date of application, *(b)* the nature of the change and *(c)* his decision.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested will take some time to collate. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parents have *(a)* voted for grant-maintained status and *(b)* against grant-maintained status; and how many were eligible to vote in GM ballots since 1 January.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 107,914 parents have been eligible to vote in the 162 ballots on grant-maintained status that have been held by primary and secondary schools in England since 1 January. Of these 34,364 voted in favour of grant-maintained status, and 36,370 voted against. Fifty-five per cent. of the ballots produced yes votes.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report,* columns 174-75, what further applications have now been received from grant-maintained schools for capital grant for the financial year 1994-95; what was the level of grant approved in each case; and what amount remains set aside awaiting allocation in the current financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: We announced the second tranche of GM capital allocations for 1994-95 on 31 March 1994. A copy of DFE press notice 69/94 listing the allocations have been placed in the Library. Allocations for capital grant received from 1 April onwards are the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what balances were held by each grant-maintained school at the end of the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: This matter is now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, *Official Report,* column *400,* if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have since that date published proposals to make a significant change in the character of the school giving in each case *(a)* the date of publication, *(b)* the nature of the proposed change and *(c)* his decision.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table lists proposals for a significant change of character published by grant-maintained schools since 24 March. None of these have been decided. Following publication of proposals, there is a period of two months during which objections may be made to my right hon. Friend.

		Date of Publication	Nature of Change
To add Sixth Form			
Wiltshire	St. Augustines RC GM Comp School	25 March 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Birmingham	Ninestiles GM School	4 April 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Rochdale	Wardle High School	27 April 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Dudley	Ellowes Hall GM School	14 May 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Lambeth	La Retraite RC Girls GM School	10 June 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Surrey	Heathside School	16 June 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Norfolk	Cromer GM High School	24 June 1994	11-16 to 11-18
Cambridgeshire	The Queens School, Wisbech	8 July 1994	11-16 to 11-18
To add Nursery			
Buckinghamshire	Brookmead GM School	31 March 1994	5-12 to 3-12
Surrey	The Manor School	9 May 1994	4-8 to 3-8
Lincolnshire	Washingborough GM School	23 May 1994	4-11 to 3-11
Cumbria	St. Pauls CE GM Junior School	25 May 1994	7-11 to 3-11

		Date of Publication	Nature of Change
Other change of age range			
Berkshire	Herschel GM Grammar School	12 May 1994	12-18 to 11-18
Berkshire	Langley GM Grammar School	12 May 1994	12-18 to 11-18
Berkshire	Slough GM Grammar School	12 May 1994	12-18 to 11-18
Buckinghamshire	Beaconsfield High School	10 June 1994	12-18 to 11-18
Hammersmith and Fulham	London Oratory School	20 May 1994	11-18 to 7-18[2]
To introduce selection in whole or part			
Lambeth	Dunraven GM School	25 March 1994	50 per cent. selection by ability
Lambeth	Archbishop Tenison GM School	17 June 1994	100 per cent selection by ability

[1] Also for extension of primary age range to cover 5 and 6 years olds.
[2] Also for selection of 20 boys at 7+ each year on musical and general ability.

Special Schools (Portsmouth)

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to make a decision on the future of Milton Ford special school, Portsmouth.

Mr. Forth: Hampshire local education authority was notified on 20 July of my right hon. Friend's qualified approval of its proposals involving the discontinuance of Milton Ford special school. The authority may implement the proposals, but final approval is subject to the agreement, approval and completion of building work.

122. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to make a decision on the future of Waterside special school, Portsmouth.

Mr. Forth: Hampshire local education authority was notified on 20 July of my right hon. Friend's qualified approval of its statutory proposals involving the redesignation of Waterside special school for secondary age pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The authority may implement the proposals but final approval is subject to the agreement, approval and completion of building work.

16 and 17-year-olds

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in full-time education or training in each quarter since January 1988.

Mr. Boswell: Quarterly counts of numbers in schools and further education colleges are not available. The full-time numbers aged 16 and 17 in England in each academic year are given in the table. The figures include some young people who were in college as part of their youth training.

Thousands

Academic year	*Pupils and students aged* 16	17
1987-88	349·9	236·8
1988-89	348·7	256·2
1989-90	349·2	265·9
1990-91	357·1	273·1
1991-92	383·7	294·7
1992-93	387·5	311·8
1993-94	389·6	322·1

Source: Annual Schools Census and the Further Education Statistical Record.

Franchise Courses

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many secondary schools are operating courses on a franchise basis from further education colleges.

Mr. Boswell: It is for individual colleges to decide on the best way of delivering provision to respond to the needs of their local communities. Information about the extent that this may be done through franchisé arrangements is not collected centrally.

Work Experience

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has *(a)* to ensure the effective provision of work experience in schools and *(b)* to remove the obligation from schools to inspect work experience placements for health and safety reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced on 24 May at column 198 the Government are asking training and enterprise councils and their partners to ensure that all pupils in their last year of compulsory education can have at least one week's work experience and will make available an additional £23 million over three years to 1997-98 to support this. There is no statutory requirement on schools to inspect work experience placements. The Department for Education recommends that such visits should take place to enable LEAs and schools to meet their common law duty to look after the pupils in their care, and LEAs to meet their duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure that they do not expose pupils to risks to their health and safety.

Sixth Form Colleges (South Hams and Torbay)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce which schools in South Hams and Torbay will become sixth form colleges; and if he will make a statement as to progress.

Mr. Robin Squire: Devon LEA published proposals on 28 January 1994 to make a significant change of character to Brixham community college, Paignton community college, Dartmouth community college and Torquay Audley Park school to change the age range from 11-16 to 11-18. The governing body of Cuthbert Mayne school published similar proposals on the same day. A decision on

the proposals will be made as soon as possible, consistent with a full and careful consideration of the educational issues involved.

Special Purpose Grant (Premises)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications have been received for special purpose grant (premises) for 1994-95; and what grant has been agreed in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the expected cost of running the meetings of the Funding Agency for Schools board and its committees and sub-committees in 1994-95; what is the sum payable to a board member attending a meeting; and how many board meetings, committees and sub-committees are likely to be held in 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Arrangements for the funding agency's internal meetings are a matter for the agency itself. Board members, apart from the chairman who receives an annual fee, are entitled to claim a fee of £155 for days on which they are transacting agency business. Members may also claim travel and subsistence expenses incurred on those days.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the budgeted running costs of the Funding Agency for Schools in 1994-95; what amounts are provided for *(a)* premises, *(b)* staffing, *(c)* travel, *(d)* entertaining and hospitality and *(e)* general; and what are the projected running costs in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government's main estimates provide for up to £12 million for the funding agency's running costs in 1994-95. Actual outturn of costs will depend on a number of factors, including growth in the number of grant-maintained schools. The detailed split of the total between different budget heads is a matter for the funding agency. Provision for future years will be decided each year as part of the annual public expenditure survey round.

Construction Courses

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are his estimates of the number of full-time places in construction courses in further education in each academic year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Boswell: The number of places which colleges provide for particular courses is not centrally recorded. Students enrolled on full-time courses in construction, which are defined in standard FE statistics as courses in building, building services and site management, for each of the four years 1989-90 to 1992-93 are as listed in the table. In the academic year 1988-89 the subject groupings and definitions used by the Department were changed. Information on a comparable basis cannot therefore be provided for earlier years.

Number of full-time enrolments at further education level on construction courses for the four years from 1989-90 to 1992-93

Academic year	*Number of enrolments*
1989-90	34,604
1990-91	30,514
1991-92	27,369
1992-93	25,097

Teacher Assistants

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those institutions that have submitted bids for the specialist teacher assistants' pilot scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend received 140 bids, from the following institutions:

Higher Education

1. Bath College of Higher Education
2. Bedford College of Higher Education
3. Bishop Grosseteste College of Lincoln
4. Bretton Hall College of the University of Leeds
5. University of Brighton
6. Charlotte Mason College
7. Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education
8. Chester College
9. University of Durham
10. University of Exeter
11. Edge Hill University College
12. University of Greenwich
13. University of Hertfordshire
14. Homerton College
15. University of Huddersfield
16. University of Hull
17. University of Humberside
18. University of London Institute of Education
19. Jews College
20. Kingston University
21. Liverpool Institute of Higher Education
22. Liverpool John Moores University
23. University of Leeds
24. University of Leicester
25. University of East London
26. LSU College
27. University of Luton
28. Manchester Metropolitan University
29. Middlesex University
30. University of Newcastle
31. New College Durham
32. University of Northumbria at Newcastle
33. University of North London
34. North Riding College
35. Nottingham Trent University
36. Open University
37. Oxford Brookes University
38. University of Plymouth
39. Roehampton Institute
40. St. Martin's College Lancaster
41. College of St. Mark and St. John
42. University of Sunderland
43. Westminster College
44. West Sussex Institute of Higher Education
45. University of Wolverhampton
46. Worcester College of Higher Education

Further Education

47. Amersham and Wycombe College
48. Basingstoke College of Technology
49. South Birmingham College
50. Blackpool and the Fylde College
51. Bourneville College of Further Education
52. Bradford and Ilkley Community College
53. Bradford and Ilkley Community College cluster
54. Bridgewater College
55. Chiltern Nursery Training College

56. Clarendon College
57. Doncaster College
58. Dunstable College
59. East Berkshire College
60. East Birmingham College
61. Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology
62. Eastleigh College
63. Evesham College
64. Farnham College
65. Filton College
66. Guildford College
67. Halesowen College
68. Hammersmith and West London College
69. Harrogate College of Arts and Technology
70. Havering College of Further Education
71. Lowestoft College
72. Mackworth College
73. Manchester College of Arts and Technology
74. Mid Kent College
75. Newcastle College
76. Norfolk College
77. Norland College
78. Northampton College
79. Norwich City College
80. Oldham FE College
81. Portsmouth College
82. Rother Valley College
83. Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
84. Shrewsbury College
85. Skelmersdale College
86. Solihull College
87. South Devon College
88. South East Essex COAT
89. South Kent College
90. Southport College
91. Southwark College
92. Stockport College
93. Stoke on Trent College
94. Strode College
95. Suffolk College
96. Totton College
97. East Warwickshire College Rugby
98. West Cheshire College
99. West Kent College
100. Worcester Sixth Form College
101. York College

Other interested bodies

102. The Audrey Wisbey Foundation
103. I CAN
104. Bradford Metropolitan Council
105. Birmingham City Council
106. Buckinghamshire County Council
107. Camden Education Department
108. City and Guilds of London Institute
109. Council For Awards in Children's Care and Education
110. Devon County Council
111. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough
112. Dorset County Council
113. Dudley Local Education Authority
114. Dyslexia Centre
115. Ealing Education Centre
116. Hackney Borough of Education and Leisure
117. Hampshire County Council
118. Harrow Education Services
119. Hertfordshire County Council
120. Hillingdon London Borough
121. John Bald (Literacy and Language Specialist)
122. Leeds Education
123. Manchester City Council
124. Merton Education and Leisure
125. Norfolk County Council INSET Centre
126. Northamptonshire County Council
127. Open School
128. Oxfordshire County Council
129. RSA
130. RNIB
131. Start Educational Services Ltd
132. Sheffield City Council
133. Shropshire County Council
134. Somerset Education Service
135. South East Surrey Dyslexia Association
136. St. Pius Xth Primary School
137. Tower Hamlets
138. Urban Learning Foundation
139. Wiltshire County Council
140. Borough of Wirral

Nursery Education

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those local education authorities which did not spend up to their standard spending assessment for nursery education in 1993-94; and by how much.

Mr. Robin Squire: For the purpose of determining standard spending assessments, the education component of standard spending, net of specific grants, is divided into five sub-blocks—under-fives, primary, secondary, 16-plus, and other education. There is no standard spending assessment specifically for nursery education as the under-fives sub-block notionally includes spending on under-fives in primary schools as well as pupils in nursery schools and in nursery classes. Local education authority spending figures are not available in a form comparable to the five sub-blocks.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the total amount of money spent on three and four-year-olds by each local education authority in 1992-93 and 1993-94 and the total increase or decrease in each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Grant for Education Support and Training

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the national totals under each heading of the GEST programme in 1994-95; and what are the amounts under each heading for each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information will take some time to collate. I will write to the hon. Member.

Assessment and Testing

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which schools are being invited to comment on his proposals for assessment and testing outlined in the letter from the Department of Further Education to selected schools on 1 July 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: All schools are welcome to comment on my right hon. Friend's proposals for the testing and assessment arrangements of seven, 11 and 14-year-olds next year, which he announced on 1 July. A random sample of 484 maintained schools were specifically invited to do so.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the closing date for responses to the proposals on assessment and testing sent to selected schools on 1 July.

Mr. Robin Squire: The closing date for all responses, from schools and other interested bodies, is 27 July.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are his reasons for proposing to end the mandatory external audit of teachers' own assessment of classroom work associated with key stage testing.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has proposed the end of the mandatory external audit of teachers' own assessments of the classroom work of seven-year-olds in response to concerns expressed by teachers about the workload involved. Existing co-operative arrangements and the proposed continuing mandatory external audit of teachers' marking of national curriculum tests will provide teachers with a cross-check of their own assessments of their pupils' work.

School Funding

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take to address the disparity of funding between primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend will be studying carefully the recommendations in the Education Select Committee's report, "The disparity in funding between primary and secondary schools", published on 13 July 1994. The Government will make a formal response to the Committee in due course. Meanwhile, I note that the Committee's report addresses local authorities among others. Under present arrangements, they have wide discretion to decide the relative levels of funding of their primary and secondary schools.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fundraising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Forth: Between 1 January and 30 June 1994, Ministers in the Department made eight overseas visits in their official capacity. Fundraising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what safeguards there are in the system in relation to local management of schools and formula funding to ensure that schools do not, by accident or design, claim for children they do not have.

Mr. Forth: It is for each local education authority to determine its own procedures for verifying the accuracy of the pupil numbers and other data to be used in determining its schools' LMS budget shares.

WALES

Departmental Costs

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the achievements of (*a*) his policies and (*b*) his Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievments and the statistical results of such monitoring; and if he will set out his targets to help small businesses in the next year.

Mr. Redwood: The Government recognise the crucial role played by small firms in the Welsh economy. We have continued to help small businesses by keeping inflation and interest rates low and by reducing legislative and administrative burdens.

My Department works with local authorities, training and enterprise councils, the development agencies and local enterprise agencies in providing a range of services for small businesses in Wales. I recently published a prospectus inviting bids for improving those services through increased collaboration both between these organisations and with the private sector.

Specific measures promoted by my Department are as follows:

Enterprise promotion

During 1993-94, TECs assisted over 9,000 owner-managers, provided 10,438 counselling sessions and, in respect of a range of information services, received nearly 55,000 inquiries. During 1992-93, TECs provided 13,903 counselling sessions and received 42,483 inquiries. They will continue to provide these services in response to demand in 1994-95.

In 1993-94, TECs helped 2,200 people start their own businesses, compared to 2,677 in 1992-93. They have a target of 2,300 in 1994-95. In addition, over 5,000 small firms are to receive business enterprise training or consulting support with a further 1,200 targeted to participate in management development.

Grant support

The Welsh Office continues to provide grant support for small firms, having regard to the level of demand in each year. During the year ending 30 June 1994, 128 firms employing under 200 accepted offers of Regional Selective Assistance totalling £16·730 million. The grants were forecast to help create or safeguard, 3,813 jobs and generate £98 million private sector investment. In the previous year, 120 firms accepted offers totalling £22·463 million and forecast to create or safeguard 3,377 jobs and help generate £143 million private sector investment.

Also in the year ending 30 June 1994, 127 small firms (i.e. those with fewer than 25 employees for investment grant and fewer than 50 for innovation grant) accepted offers of Regional Enterprise Grant totalling £1·847 million. The grants were forecast to help generate £6·88 million private sector investment. In the previous year, 163 firms accepted offers totalling £2·469 million, with forecast private sector investment totalling £8·75 million.

My Department is also continuing with an active programme under the Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (SMART). In the previous two years, small firms from Wales have done well, gaining 16 and 17 awards respectively—approximately 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom total. Under the Support for Products under Research Scheme (SPUR), grant support for small firms in Wales rose from £0·96 million in 1992-93 to £1·21 million in 1993-94, a percentage increase of 26 per cent.

Deregulation

The Welsh Office is continuing to contribute actively to the Government's drive to reduce the burden of regulations on business. A consultation exercise was carried out with Welsh business interests in 1993: this identified no Wales-only legislation as placing a burden on business. During 1994, all Welsh Office subordinate legislation is being reviewed.

Inward Investment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each district and county council area and for Wales as a whole for each of the last five available years, the number of industrial projects involving inward investment from outside the United Kingdom, the estimated number of new jobs resulting from these projects, the associated total capital expenditure involved, the associated public capital expenditure involved and the amount in column 5 expressed as a percentage of column 4.

Mr. Redwood: A summary of foreign-owned inward investment projects recorded over the last five financial years together with forecast new employment and capital investment has been placed in the Library of the House. The figures represent companies projections at the time of the decision to invest and they do not take account of any subsequent changes.

The amount of public capital expenditure involved is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Welsh Consumer Council

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures are in place to ensure that the budget and means of the Welsh Consumer Council are properly agreed and controlled so that the Council is at no time able to exceed agreed spending limits or act without due authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Consumer Council's budget is set at a level agreed between the National Consumer Council and the Scottish and Welsh Consumer Councils from the grant-in-aid the NCC receives from the Department of Trade and Industry. The Welsh Consumer Council has established procedures for controlling and monitoring its own expenditure within the agreed limit, although the NCC is responsible, under the terms of the grant-in-aid conditions, for ensuring expenditure is properly authorised and that expenditure is contained within the agreed allocation.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those grant schemes operated by the Welsh Development Agency which have been suspended or terminated on legal advice during the past quarter; on what date the legal advice was received; on what date the letter of instruction to terminate the grant schemes was sent to the agency; if he will place a copy of the independent legal advice in the Library; what is his estimate of the budgetary implications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: On 8 June my Department instructed the WDA to avoid further contractual commitments on the mid-Wales development grant scheme, DRIVE, rural conversion grant and the community enterprise programme. On 21 June my Department extended this instruction to small business loans, subsidised rural loan schemes, valleys enterprise loans schemes, valleys small loans schemes and the technology growth fund. As I explained to the House, I do not wish powers to be used which are subject to any legal uncertainty. I do wish to strengthen local authorities' involvement in these areas.

The Comptroller and Auditor General has certified the accounts of the WDA without qualification.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has to clarify the legal position concerning the grant-in-aid provided by his Department to the Welsh Development Agency for the purposes of the rural conversion grant, the DRIVE scheme, the technology growth fund, the rural loans, valleys loans and the small loans scheme; and what consultations he has had with Welsh local authority associations in relation to powers to give loans and grants to small firms and the provisioning of *(a)* basic and *(b)* supplementary credit approval for this purpose;

(2) what proposals he has had to recommence payments of all the Welsh Development Agency and mid-Wales development loans and grants schemes to small and medium-sized firms suspended on 8 July.

Mr. Redwood: As I made clear in my statement to the House on 7 July, *Official Report*, columns *463-64*, I intend that in future grant schemes for small businesses should be delivered by the local authorities. Officials are consulting with the Welsh local authority associations.

Arrangements for the figure of loans to small businesses are under consideration.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency in relation to the irregular use of grant-in-aid for *(a)* rural conversion grant, *(b)* the DRIVE scheme, *(c)* the technology growth fund, *(d)* rural loans, *(e)* valleys loans and *(f)* the small loans scheme; what expenditure under the above headings has been qualified in the 1993-94 accounts of (i) the agency and (ii) Development Board for Rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I meet regularly with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss a range of issues.

Neither the agency's accounts nor those of the Development Board for Rural Wales have been qualified.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the Welsh Development Agency concerning the issuing of a press release by the agency explaining the qualifications to its accounts for 1993-94 arising from legal dishonesty over the rural conversion grant, DRIVE, technology growth fund, rural loans, valleys loans and small loans scheme.

Mr. Redwood: The Comptroller and Auditor General has certified the agency's accounts without qualification.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify the guidelines applying to the Welsh Development Agency's urban regeneration activities in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993 as regards consents required from his Department for any proposed land acquisition by the agency for such purpose; what accelerated procedure was available for such purposes; on how many occasions such (i) ordinary and (ii) accelerated consent was sought from his Department in each of those three years; if he will specify the local authority area concerned; and what was the average length of time taken by his Department to approve any such applications.

Mr. Redwood: Proposed land acquisitions by the Welsh Development Agency in respect of its urban development programme and requiring consent, are dealt with under urban development guidelines which were introduced in April 1992. Prior to that, all land acquisitions were handled by reference to the site development and factory building guidelines introduced in 1980. Approvals are not subject to a pre-determined timetable and proposals are dealt with as appropriate.

Approvals for proposed acquisitions are as follows:

Local authority area	*Number*	*Year(s)*
Merthyr Tydfil	2	1991-92 and 1993-94
Cynon Valley	1	1991-92
Preseli-Pembrokeshire	1	1991-92

Local authority area	Number	Year(s)
Llanelli	1	1993-94
Ynys Mon	2	1993-94
Rhondda	1	1993-94

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are required to lay their annual report before Parliament; which publish an annual report without a requirement to do so; and how many of the reports in either category have been deposited in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Required to lay annual report before Parliament

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation; Countryside Council for Wales; Development Board for Rural Wales; Housing for Wales; Land Authority for Wales; Wales Tourist Board; Welsh Development Agency; Welsh Language Board; Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Publish an annual report without requirement

National Library of Wales; National Museum of Wales; Wales Youth Agency; Further and Higher Education Funding Councils *(a)*; Arts Council of Wales *(b)*; Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

All these reports are placed in the Library of the House, with the exception of *(a)* first annual reports will not be published until later this year; and *(b)* first annual reports will not be published until next year.

In addition, the Sports Council for Wales and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales are required to publish an annual report. I lay the former's before Parliament; copies of the Royal Commission's annual reports will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

Dentists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of *(a)* community dentists and *(b)* family health services authority salaried dentists employed as at 1 April for each of the past five years.

Mr. Redwood: Information relating to community dental staff is collected annually as at 30 September and is given in the table:

There were three FHSA salaried dentists in post at 1 April 1994. No salaried dentists were appointed until after 1 April 1993. One further dentist was appointed after 1 April 1994.

Community Dental Practitioners[1]

	Number
1989	104
1990	106
1991	103
1992	100
1993	87

[1] Whole-time equivalents excluding locum staff.

Agricultural Wages Order

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of persons whose pay and conditions are covered by the Agricultural Wages Order 1994 for each county in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Redwood: Based on the June 1993 agricultural and horticultural census, it is estimated that the number of workers—excluding those on minor holdings—covered by the Agricultural Wages Order was 12,714 as at June 1993. Estimates by county are given in the table.

	Numbers
Clwyd	1,906
Dyfed	4,320
Gwent	990
Gwynedd	1,588
Mid Glamorgan	473
Powys	2,543
South Glamorgan	447
West Glamorgan	447

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *310*, on what date he sent the letter to the Development Board for Rural Wales instructing the board to make no further payments of mid-Wales development grants, rural buildings conversion grants, DRIVE grants and community enterprise projects.

Mr. Redwood: My Department wrote to the development board on 8 June 1994, concerning relevant schemes.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *310*, what is his latest estimate of the date of completion of consultation with local authorities and their associations concerning the powers to be transferred from the Development Board for Rural Wales to them at *(a)* borough and *(b)* county level.

Mr. Redwood: It is my intention for the consultation with the local authority associations to be completed as soon as possible.

CBI Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met CBI Wales and its council.

Mr. Redwood: I met representatives of CBI Wales in June last year and was a principal guest at the CBI Wales dinner in December.

Further Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secondary schools are operating courses on a franchise basis from further education colleges.

Mr. Redwood: I know of no schools operating courses on a franchise basis from further education colleges in the academic year 1993-94. However, there are plans for some schools in South Glamorgan to provide courses on a franchise basis from Barry college and Coleg Glan Hafren from September 1994.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the size of the departmental unit responsible for the furtherance of NHS trusts.

Mr. Redwood: Twelve full-time staff work specifically on NHS trust issues.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the Director of the national health service in Wales gave guidance to the South Glamorgan health authority community services trust-designate in relation to the expression of interest by the Llandough NHS trust in running the community health services in the Vale of Glamorgan area; whether the guidance had statutory support; what representations he has had in relation to such guidance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 5 May, column *645*.

The director of NHS Wales wrote to the community and priority services unit on 19 November 1993 inviting an application for NHS trust status from April 1995. I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Wales Tourist Board

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Wales tourist board in relation to the number of *(a)* applications and *(b)* approvals for suspension of the repayment of grants, where sale of the grant-aided tourist facility has taken place before the due period in each year from 1988 to 1993 inclusive.

Mr. Redwood: None on these specific matters. The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of Applications for Suspensions*	*Approvals*
1988	3	1
1989	7	3
1990	1	0
1991	2	1
1992	1	1
1993	0	0

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the relevant local authorities concerned with the de-designation of the Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to the ongoing financial obligations arising from the construction of the barrage in relation to the *(a)* valuation of land, *(b)* water quality obligations and *(c)* other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 July, column *813-14*.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the provision of *(a)* grant-in-aid and *(b)* national loans fund finance to the Cardiff Bay development corporation; what legal opinion he has sought in relation to the regularity of the payments of grants by the corporation to (i) Prudential Assurance Company and (ii) NCM for their new headquarters offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Grant-in-aid of £48·2 million is being made available to the Cardiff Bay development corporation in this financial year. There are no plans to draw on the national loans fund.

The corporation has wide-ranging powers to incur expenditure to secure the regeneration of its area under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978. It is for the corporation to assure itself of the regularity of any grant payments it makes. I have had no reason to seek separate legal opinion on the corporation's support for Prudential and NCM.

Fish Passes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Wales region of the National Rivers Authority concerning research programmes into the efficiency of fish passes on south Wales rivers, barrages and weirs with respect to the passage of the (i) salmon, (ii) sea-trout or sewin, (iii) river lampey, (iv) sea lampey, (v) allis shad, (vi) twaite shad and (vii) eel and into the impact of barrages on the long term management strategies needed to maintain appropriate water quality standards.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the chairmen of the Welsh training and enterprise councils concerning the current level of financial surpluses in hand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have not discussed the current level of financial surpluses with TEC chairmen. However, my officials regularly discuss the planned use of surpluses with TEC chairmen and chief executives during annual contract negotiations and therefore have taken current levels of surplus into account when considering contracts for 1994-95.

Welsh Historic Monuments

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the future of Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments.

Mr. Redwood: Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments, was established as an executive agency within the Welsh Office in April 1991. Following an evaluation and options review, I have decided that Cadw should continue as an executive agency for the next five years. Within this framework, a significant part of Cadw's operations will be subject to market testing, including initially some 115 posts in Cadw's direct labour force. I also intend to consider the feasibility of other methods of increasing the involvement of the private sector in the agency's operations.

Medical Emergency Admissions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many medical emergency admissions were made by each hospital in each of the last five years; and what assessment he has made of these figures on the planning for bed provision in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The following table shows, for each of the last five years for which data are available, the number of immediate admissions to hospitals in Wales, excluding those which were classified as mental handicap or mental illness.

The provision of hospital beds is a matter for health authorities and NHS trusts. It is their responsibility to ensure that beds are available for those who need them.

	Immediate admissions in financial year				
Health Authority/Hospital	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd					
Abergele[1]	433	402	1,646	—	—
Catherine Gladstone[2]	58	81	92	56	11
Chirk Community[3]	—	—	83	154	188
Colwyn Bay Community	343	356	367	376	381
Deeside Community[3]	—	—	—	—	75
Denbighshire Infirmary	304	332	349	377	475
Dobshill	—	1	18	30	43
Flint Community	235	231	236	168	106
H.M. Stanley[1]	2,570	2,666	10,248	—	—
Holywell Community	284	276	277	170	106
Llangollen Community	192	210	201	97	94
Lluesty[1]	84	71	149	—	—
Meadowslea	1	—	22	1	12
Mold Community	171	286	346	302	275
Penley	1	—	1	—	—
Prestatyn Community	55	49	71	76	22
Royal Alexandra	166	149	143	135	120
Ruthin Community	209	227	217	191	187
Trevalyn	—	5	22	10	17
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd[1]	11,600	12,644	20,580	16,298	16,155
Ysbyty Maelor[1]	12,499	12,228	4,219	14,782	14,809
East Dyfed					
Aberaeron	3	4	1	10	2
Amman Valley	5	1	28	90	11
Bronglais	4,436	4,564	5,020	5,085	5,554
Bryntirion	799	607	187	17	403
Cardigan and District	42	125	185	201	275
Llandovery	301	373	302	151	294
Llanelli General[2]	2,648	2,380	487	—	—
Mynydd Mawr	3	38	33	29	93
Prince Philip[3]	—	—	3,842	6,216	7,003
Tregaron	10	13	6	54	81
West Wales General	7,599	8,144	7,973	7,491	9,880
Pembrokeshire					
South Pembrokeshire	427	406	402	536	507
Tenby Cottage	149	139	133	188	212
Withybush General	9,523	10,495	9,670	8,706	8,968
Gwent					
Abertillery District	74	117	133	144	109
Allt-Yr-Yn	3	3	5	16	14
Blaenavon Health Care Unit	135	201	179	130	110
Blaina and District	170	247	190	185	137
County	819	767	586	365	3
Ebbw Vale	37	84	66	138	99
Monmouth General	148	170	181	153	147
Mount Pleasant	284	302	164	145	299
Nevill Hall	10,537	10,855	9,945	9,269	9,569
Oakdale	3	3	9	3	2
Pontypool and District	83	76	48	46	52
Royal Gwent	16,114	16,573	18,407	18,103	18,520
St. Lawrence	1,583	1,557	1,895	1,807	1,888
St. Woolos	3,365	3,852	4,355	3,627	3,840
Tredegar General	50	111	70	98	95
Gwynedd					
Bron-y-Garth	43	31	—	—	250
Bryn Beryl	255	169	204	245	212
Brynseiont	33	13	8	44	70
Bryn-y-neuadd	—	—	—	34	—
Caernarvon Eye and Cottage[2]	130	119	19	—	—
Cefni[2]	10	4	—	—	—
Conwy	51	76	127	128	129
Dolgellau and District	354	203	301	207	251
Druid	20	6	3	95	68
Eryri	116	10	6	103	117
Ffestiniog Memorial	205	232	189	181	159
Groesynyd[2]	7	14	12	—	—
Llandudno General	3,531	3,006	2,785	2,261	1,532
Madoc Memorial[2]	112	155	104	—	—

Health Authority/Hospital	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
St. David's	4,749	2,014	1,487	—	1,043
Stanley Sailors	214	160	16	189	186
Towyn and District War Memorial	474	462	441	338	247
Valley	26	9	1	76	94
Ysbyty Gwynedd	12,335	12,258	12,928	14,097	10,459
Mid Glamorgan					
Aberbargoed and District	187	198	189	28	173
Aberdare General	412	502	383	571	578
Bridgend General	775	876	1,032	1,358	1,270
Caerphilly District Miners	2,638	2,835	2,802	3,281	3,064
Dewi Sant	1,318	1,554	1,337	2	—
East Glamorgan General	10,484	10,137	10,887	12,462	12,413
Energlyn	2	—	4	—	2
Fedw Hir[2]	2	4	5	—	—
Llwynypia	780	780	850	920	868
Maesgwyn	82	96	177	50	60
Maesteg General	430	439	350	400	388
Mardy	93	92	34	54	42
Merthyr General[2]	453	522	593	5	—
Mountain Ash General	357	419	355	170	36
Pentwyn[2]	25	21	37	3	—
Pontypridd and District[2]	29	27	53	2	—
Porth and District[2]	33	19	12	43	216
Prince Charles	10,626	11,612	12,973	14,300	14,947
Princess of Wales	9,623	10,787	11,458	10,844	11,002
Redwood Memorial	129	91	120	39	102
Rhiwfelin[2]	2	1	3	—	—
St. Tydfil's	2,228	1,808	1,393	2,284	2,253
Talygarn[2]	155	76	77	—	—
Tonteg	17	7	—	41	5
Treherbert	75	72	79	91	59
Tyntyla[2]	4	3	—	2	—
Ysbyty George Thomas[3]	—	—	—	12	21
Ystrad Mynach	13	—	9	38	107
Powys					
Breconshire War Memorial	891	1,003	997	1,024	1,036
Bronllys	96	154	146	152	184
Builth Wells Cottage	407	459	522	605	413
Knighton	71	100	104	93	105
Llandrindod Wells	581	684	668	687	780
Llanidloes & District	220	345	375	310	327
Machynlleth and District	145	172	137	412	563
Machynlleth Chest	226	269	230		
Montgomery County Infirmary	358	375	272	281	351
St. David's	52	49	41	1,441	—
Victoria Memorial	164	185	223	265	265
Ystradgynlais Community	124	132	79	184	262
South Glamorgan					
Barry Community	577	569	526	526	559
Cardiff Royal Infirmary	11,524	10,800	10,780	10,783	10,781
Childrens ENT[2]	2	3	—	1	—
Glan Ely[2]	1	5	4	—	—
Lansdowne	4	2	1	3	6
Llandough	9,180	10,478	14,172	13,159	13,490
Neale Kent[2]	1	2	19	—	—
Prince of Wales	76	102	59	26	19
Rookwood	7	2	17	5	20
St. David's[2]	277	263	227	1	—
Sully	429	533	510	944	702
University Hospital of Wales	13,205	16,857	16,981	18,238	17,493
Velindre	625	770	790	682	857
West Glamorgan					
Clydach War Memorial	114	114	84	123	47
Cymla	737	469	14	364	352
Fairwood	—	—	—	—	7
Gellinudd[2]	36	37	39	42	—
Gorseinon	34	150	118	195	114
Groeswen	—	—	—	32	38
Hill House	11	4	6	19	31
Morriston	16,157	17,709	14,239	11,655	10,792
Mount Pleasant	29	15	8	75	19
Neath General	6,464	7,378	6,509	7,951	7,999
Port Talbot General	15	8	5	22	4
Singleton	5,936	6,613	5,028	9,924	9,528

Health Authority/Hospital	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Not classified to hospitals	—	—	—	550	1,458

[1] Data for these hospitals in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is considered unreliable.
[2] Hospital closed during period covered.
[3] Hospital opened during period covered.

Notes:
1. Figures for 1988-89 to 1990-91 derived from Hospital Activity Analysis. For subsequent years from the Patient Episode Database for Wales.
2. In some cases patient records were incomplete and these are shown separately at the bottom of the table.

Departmental Efficiency

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Richards: [*Pursuant to the reply, 14 February, column 628.*] My hon. Friend may wish to be aware that in 1994-95 the Welsh Office is seeking to achieve efficiency savings of 6 per cent. This compares with the Treasury requirement to make savings of at least 2 per cent.

HEALTH

Health Service Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority the numbers of health service directly employed staff by main staff group in each of the last five years; and what were the changes between each year and the next over the whole period in numbers and percentages.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will be placed in the Library.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the latest figures and list for each of the last four years by region the number of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* midwives, *(d)* health visitors, *(e)* administration and clerical staff and *(f)* managers.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library. The number of managers has been deliberately increased since the mid 1980s—not just since the reforms—because the service was previously undermanaged. Much of the increase arises from the reclassification of existing staff—including many senior nurses—as managers. General and senior managers still account for only 2 per cent. of the total national health service workforce in England and 3 per cent. of the total NHS expenditure on salaries and wages.

Prescriptions

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions were issued in each of the last five years for which figures are available; how many of these prescriptions were exempt from charges; and what was the gross income to her Department from prescription charges.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table. The analysis of free-of-charge and charge-paid items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors is based on a one-in-20 sample of all the prescriptions they submit to the Prescription Pricing Authority. Items dispensed by dispensing doctors cannot be similarly analysed because doctors are not obliged to obtain a written declaration of entitlement to free prescriptions from the patients to whom they dispense free of charge, and there is no basis on which a reasonable estimate could be made. All prescribed items personally administered to patients by prescribing doctors are free of charge.

Number of prescribed items (millions) dispensed in the Family Health Services in England 1989 to 1993 and revenue from prescription charges (£ million) in England 1989-90 to 1993-94

	Prescribed items[1]					Charge revenue[2]	
		Dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors					
Year	Total	Free of charge	Charge paid	Dispensed by dispensing doctors	Personally administered free of charge by prescribing doctors	Year	Amount
		Free of charge	Charge paid				
1989	383·5	273·7	78·2	25·6	6·0	1989-90	189·3
1990	394·8	282·8	77·7	26·8	7·5	1990-91	205·9
1991	406·5	296·4	74·3	27·7	8·1	1991-92	215·2
1992	425·1	313·1	73·6	29·1	9·2	1992-93	242·0
1993	445·4	332·8	72·3	30·6	9·7	1993-94	265·3

[1] 1989 and 1990 figures are based on fees; 1991 to 1993 figures are based on items. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
[2] Includes revenue from sale of prescription prepayment certificates. 1993-94 figures are provisional.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *347-48*, if she will update the information on NHS expenditure to include estimates for 1994-95; and if she will adjust the appropriate figures in the tables on the basis of current prices.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library. It is not possible to adjust for changes in the input unit costs beyond 1990-91 for capital expenditure or for national health service current expenditure, or beyond 1992-93 for hospital and community health services current expenditure.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *925-26*, on health services expenditure, if she will adjust the figures by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* input unit costs to include figures for (i) 1992-93, (ii) 1993-94 and (iii) estimates for 1994-95; and if she will recalculate the appropriate figures in the new tables on the basis of current prices.

Mr. Sackville: The tables referred to have been updated and will be placed in the Library. They now include programme budget figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 in place of provisional provider based estimates used previously. Expenditure figures for 1993-94 and estimates for 1994-95 are not yet available. Expenditure estimates adjusted for input unit costs are not yet available at 1993-94 prices.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been spent in real terms outside the NHS by purchasers in each year since 1990 *(a)* in total, *(b)* by regional health authority and *(c)* by district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to the hon. Member.

Military Personnel

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that military use of NHS facilities and staff will not be paid for out of the NHS budget.

Mr. Sackville: Under existing arrangements service personnel are able to receive treatment from the national health service. But for most normal peacetime purposes service personnel are treated by defence medical services at the expense of the Defence budget. This will continue under the arrangements proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Any agreed additional costs to the NHS from setting up military district hospital units in NHS hospitals and from treating service patients there will be met from the Defence budget.

Community Dental Service

364. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes the community dental service being funded if responsibility for the community dental service is transferred to health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities are already responsible for purchasing community dental services. DHAs are funded for this purpose through their general allocations.

Hospital Water

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many hospitals do not meet the current legal limit of lead in water;

(2) how many times in each of the last five years sub-standard drinking water has been reported from hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any hospitals which do not meet the current legal limit of lead in water nor of any reports of sub-standard drinking water in the national health service.

Ambulances

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of ambulances used unleaded fuel in each of the last five years;

(2) what percentage of ambulances have catalytic converters.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Hospital Information Support Systems

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is her policy that the national health service as a whole adopt hospital information support systems; what progress has been made to date; on what criteria that or any other system is selected; and if cost comparisons can now be made between similar units.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service executive's information management and technology strategy encourages hospitals to move towards the implementation of integrated information systems.

Around 50 sites in England are implementing hospital information support systems.

It is for each hospital to determine, locally, whether it can justify spending on such systems. If so, then each is expected, where relevant, to run a competitive procurement under European Community rules.

Costs of many contracts have been published in the *Official Journal of European Communities*, from which comparisons may be made. Copies of the journal are available in the Library.

Prisoner Referrals

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown of the referrals for psychiatric treatment of prisoners broken down by category for each year since 1984.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table:

Estimated number of cases of hospital admissions, including day cases, recorded as being referred from penal institutions, courts, or police stations

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*[1]1991-92*
Acute sector	1,560	1,496	1,548
Geriatric	40	16	20
Maternity	24	20	44
Mental illness	4,720	5,024	4,996
Learning disability	88	44	76
Not known	—	—	4
TOTAL	6,432	6,600	6,688

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics.
[1] Provisional.

Advertising

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column 422, what proportion of expenditure on advertising by the health service concerned health education information and how much concerned information related to health reforms.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to the hon. Member.

Tobacco

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many shops there are on national health service premises selling cigarettes otherwise than to long-stay patients who are smokers.

Mr. Sackville: Surveys carried out by regional health authorities showed that six outlets were still offering tobacco products for general sale at the end of May 1993. Three of these outlets have since ceased such general sale. The Department will continue to keep the matter under review.

Energy

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many energy consultants were employed by the national health service in each of the last five years; and what was the energy bill for the national health service in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of energy consultants employed in the national health service is not available centrally. I understand that individual national health service trusts and health authorities have made appointments of this kind.

Expenditure on energy by national health service trusts and health authorities is shown in the table.

Total expenditure on energy by national health service trusts and health authorities

Year	*£ thousands*
1988-89	210,374
1989-90	219,615
1990-91	233,884
1991-92	270,141
1992-93	278,750

Source:
1. Annual accounts and financial returns of district, regional and special health authorities.
2. Annual financial returns of national health service trusts, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made towards her target for reducing energy consumption in the national health service over the five years from 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The target for reducing energy consumption in the national health service applies to the five years from April 1991. In the first two years, the national health service achieved a reduction in energy consumption of 7·1 per cent. which is the latest period for which information is available. Plans for the subsequent three years indicate that the national health service will meet the overall reduction of 15 per cent.

Publicity

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column 22, what amount of money spent on publicity by the information division is expended on *(a)* information or publicity about or as a result of the reforms and *(b)* health education matters for the public.

Mr. Sackville: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Military District Hospital Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Health Department how the extra military district hospital units to be established in national health service hospitals will be accommodated; and what extra funding will be available for the hospitals in which they are placed.

Mr. Sackville: Service personnel in military district hospital units will be integrated within national health service hospitals. How they and service patients are accommodated will be a matter to be discussed directly between the hospital and the Ministry of Defence. Any agreed extra costs to a hospital from establishing a unit or from treating service patients will be met from the Defence budget.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Defence regarding his plans to close the Army's Cambridge military hospital at Aldershot and the Princess Alexandra hospital at Wroughton and to set up regional military district hospital units at NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: In common with other Cabinet colleagues my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been kept fully appraised of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence's proposals.

Mortality Statistics

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the figures for stroke mortality by gender in each district health authority for the last two years;

(2) if she will list the figures for breast cancer mortality in each district health authority in each of the last two years;

(3) if she will list the figures for lung cancer by gender at district health authority level for the last two years;

(4) if she will give the figures for skin cancer mortality by gender by district health authority for the last two years;

(5) if she will give the figures for coronary heart disease mortality by gender by district health authority for the last two years;

(6) if she will list the figures for cervical cancer mortality by district health authority for the last two years.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Health Service Indicators

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the preliminary set of outcome indicators produced by the population health outcome indicators feasibility study; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will publish the criteria used by the Faculty of Public Health in confirming the suitability of outcome indicators for the health service indicators set;

(3) if she will list the outcome indicators recommended by the Chief Medical Officer's working party on outcome indicators; and if she will also list which of those indicators were confirmed by the Faculty of Public Health to be included in the latest set of health service indicators;

(4) what outcome indicators will be included in the 1992-93 health service indicator set;

(5) if she will make a statement on the population health outcome indicators for the national health service feasibility study.

Mr. Sackville: The Chief Medical Officer's working party on population health outcome indicators did not recommend specific outcome indicators. It identified a number of potential indicators which could be produced using data currently available. The Department of Health subsequently commissioned the Faculty of Public Health Medicine to undertake a feasibility study of suggested indicators against a set of criteria. The faculty made some recommendations as part of the first phase of this study, following which the Department of Health commissioned analysis of those indicators recommended. This resulted in the production of the two documents 'Population Health Outcome Indicators for the NHS—A Consultation Document' and 'Population Health Outcome Indicators for the NHS—A Feasibility Study' copies of which are available in the Library. These documents list the population health outcome indicators suggested by the study.

The criteria adopted in determining the suitability of particular indicators were set out in some detail in the documents but one overriding criterion was that the indicators should be based on routinely collected data.

Following a positive consultation, which showed that this initiative was favourably received, the central health outcomes unit of the Department will shortly be commissioning work within the health service to test the practicality and effectiveness of the indicators suggested in a working environment. Updated indicators will, in future, be included within the "Public Health Common Data Set" which is distributed to the NHS annually. The information will not, necessarily, be duplicated within the health service indicators.

Work is also starting on a further phase of development of population health outcomes measures. This will build on the work which has taken place and specifically will look to the future information needs of the health service and the data which will require to be collected to assess health outcomes.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library, indicator numerators, denominators and values and rankings, as mentioned on page 24 of the 1991-92 health service indicators discussion paper.

Mr. Sackville: Arrangements are being made for the numerators and denominator values used in the health service indicators to be placed in the Library when available. These should be used with care since the timetable for the publication often requires the use of provisional and unvalidated data which may be corrected in published values of statistics.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health of what the purchaser mortality ML61, as used in the health service indicators set, consists.

Mr. Sackville: An explanation of the purchaser mortality ML61, as used in the health service indicators set, is contained in the health service handbook, copies of which are available in the Library.

Clinical Effectiveness Indicators

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list all information sources, including databases, detailing clinical effectiveness indicators which are *(a)* maintained and *(b)* used by the Department of Health, its public bodies and other advisory bodies; and if she will also list the forms in which those databases are maintained;

(2) which clinical effectiveness indicator datasets refer *(a)* to individual episodes and *(b)* to individual patients;

(3) what clinical effectiveness indicators are collated at the level of *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* individual units.

Mr. Sackville: The assessment of clinical effectiveness is complex and does not readily lend itself to the production of indicators. However, there are a number of national confidential inquiries based on systems reporting individual episodes and individual patients whose anonymised reports assist clinicians to improve clinical effectiveness.

The main confidential enquiries are:

National Confidential Enquiry into Peri-Operative Deaths
Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy
Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths
National Confidential Enquiry into Quality of Genetic Counselling

In addition, the national network of cancer registries which are computerised, provide a database of cancer cases and the outcome of those cases.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines there are to ensure that collated clinical effectiveness data are seen by surgeons in each individual hospital.

Mr. Sackville: It is a professional responsibility of all doctors, including surgeons, to keep in touch with relevant professional developments. This includes information about clinical effectiveness.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the changes which have been made in the collation of clinical effectiveness indicators as a result of the 1991-92 health service indicators discussion paper.

Mr. Sackville: As a result of the 1991-92 health service indicator discussion paper the indicator set was increased to include the "Population Health Outcome Indicators for the NHS". Copies of the revised indicators are available in the Library.

Clinical Guidelines

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of the national health service executive initiative involving the use of clinical guidelines to inform the contracting process.

Mr. Sackville: The clinical outcomes group has established a sub-group on clinical guidelines which will guide the future development of the national health service executive's work.

A series of five workshops have been held to gain feedback from the national health service on the development work initiated in December.

Ambulance Response Times

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the criteria for defining rural and urban areas in compiling ambulance response times; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The formula for classification of national health service ambulance services as urban or rural was introduced following the acceptance of a recommendation made in an independent consultants report in 1990. Those ambulance services serving an area with an overall population density of greater than 2·5 people per acre were classified as urban. Others were classified as rural. The population density formula acknowledges the higher number of longer distance journeys travelled by ambulance services in less densely populated rural areas.

Out-patients

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures are available to indicate how many patients are discharged from a hospital out-patient unit after three consultations; how many of these are subsequently referred back to the out-patient unit; and what figures are available specifically for Burnley health care trust.

Mr. Sackville: The information available centrally on out-patient attendances is published in "Outpatients and ward attenders for England, Financial Year 1992-93" copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what figures are available for general practitioner referral times for a patient's initial appointment at Burnley health care trust's out-patient unit, and the numbers of patients involved; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what monitoring she has done of general practitioner referral times from initial letters to a patient's initial appointment at a hospital out-patient unit; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: A system of monitoring the length of time a patient waits from general practitioner referral to first consultant out-patient appointment is being introduced. Data collection is in the early stages and the information collected is not yet sufficiently comprehensive to enable publication.

Operation Cancellations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures are available for operations cancelled within one week of the appointment date; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Infertility

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information she has available to show the level of NHS expenditure for infertility within each English region;

(2) how many persons have received infertility treatment within the NHS in each year since 1983; on how many occasions this has led to pregnancy; and what figures she has available for successful pregnancy form NHS in-vitro fertilisation treatment, annually, for each NHS region in England.

Mr. Sackville: Information is available for three years on the numbers of finished consultant episodes for cases with a diagnosis of female infertility. Figures for ordinary admissions and day cases in England are shown in the table:

	Number
1989-90	25,510
1990-91	25,145
1991-92	[1]27,276

[1] Provisional.

These figures include only those patients who are admitted to hospital to use a bed.

Comparable information for earlier years is not available. Information is not available centrally on the numbers of successful treatments or the level of national health service expenditure on infertility in each English region.

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics.

Day Care Surgery

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the criteria set down to define treatment suitable for day surgical care; and if she will make a statement about the future of day care surgery.

Mr. Sackville: Hospital consultants are responsible for making clinical judgments about the suitability of individual patients for day surgery treatments. In 1992 the Royal College of Surgeons produced guidelines which stated that day surgery is now considered the best option for 50 per cent. of all patients undergoing elective surgical procedures. The introduction of new surgical techniques, and developments in anaesthesia, are increasing the range of operations which can be carried out on a day care basis.

Waiting Times

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals have been reported by the Audit Commission as using inadequate systems for compiling waiting times; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The systems in place to compile the waiting times statistics published in the 1993-94 hospital and ambulance services comparative performance guide were reviewed by the Audit Commission's auditors. Hospitals or trusts whose waiting times result in the comparative performance guide have no star ratings are those where the auditors had reservations about the systems in place. Copies of the comparative performance guide are available in the Library.

Staff (Consultation)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the current arrangements for a standing procedure for consultations with staff concerning the operation and administration of the service.

Mr. Sackville: Long established consultation arrangements with the staff sides of the Whitley councils ensure that all staff interests have the opportunity to comment on major departmental developments likely to affect them.

Porton Down

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultancy contracts have been secured by the new centre for applied microbiology and research at Porton Down; what other Government Department's have placed contracts at the centre; what is the total value of those contracts; and if she will make a statement on the operation of the Microbiological Research Authority since 1 April.

Mr. Sackville: The Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research—CAMR—provides a range of services including consultancy advice, research, development and production. Many contracts involve some or all of these services. Since 1 April 1994, CAMR has secured 26 consultancy-only contracts at a total value of £72,000 and 11 contracts involving consultancy and other services with a value of £2 million in 1994-95. In addition CAMR is providing similar services under pre-existing contracts to the value of £5·5 million. Three contracts have been placed by other Government Departments with a total value of £387,000 in 1994-95.

Since 1 April the authority has completed a major reorganisation of the centre to give a better focus to its operations and has created a business development unit to seek additional external income. I look forward to meeting the staff and reviewing progress when I visit the centre in September.

Dental Services (Lewisham, Deptford)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dentists in the constituency of Lewisham, Deptford, which will accept NHS patients; of those listed, which dentists have said that their lists for NHS patients are currently closed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham family health services authority advises that it can help a patient in the area find a national health service dentist. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Ian Mills, the chairman, for details.

Bradford Community Health Council

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and organisations represented of those serving currently on Bradford community health council; how many vacancies currently exist; how many public meetings community health councils are required to hold annually; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information about the names, vacancies and organisations represented on individual community health councils is not available centrally. Regional health authorities, as the establishing body, have these details.

Community health councils are required to hold meetings once every three months and these meetings would normally be open to the public.

Private Consultant Episodes

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many finished consultant episodes on private patients in NHS hospitals occurred by *(a)* region and *(b)* district health authority in (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The most recent information available at regional level is shown in the table.

Region	*1990-91*	*[1]1991-92*
England	81,366	89,863
Northern	3,349	3,178
Yorkshire	4,842	5,263
Trent	2,797	3,038
East Anglia	4,504	4,270
North West Thames	10,345	9,337
North East Thames	7,402	9,850
South East Thames	6,648	8,636
South West Thames	5,081	6,269
Wessex	2,643	2,673
Oxford	6,928	7,244
South Western	5,044	5,458
West Midlands	6,081	6,866
Mersey	2,370	2,249
North Western	6,445	7,224
Special health authorities	6,887	8,306

[1] Provisional.
Source: SD2A, Hospital Episode Statistics.

Reliable information at district level could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what developments there have been in regard to the provision of indoor/outdoor powered wheelchairs for all permanently disabled children and adults requiring them for independent mobility on the basis recommended by the Government's working party chaired by Professor—now Lord—McColl in 1986, further to the Adjournment debate on this subject on 1 July; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I reiterate the remarks I made during the constructive debate on 1 July at columns 1124-28. I made it clear that the issue of wheelchairs, including powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs, is a matter for health authorities and national health service hospital and community care units—trusts—in the light of their resources and priorities, but I have set up a departmental working group to look at all aspects of such a scheme and it will take evidence from experts. I have asked for a report to be made to me by the end of October.

Durham University Business School

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants or other payments have been made to the Durham university business school and for what purposes by the Northern regional health authority under its present chairman.

Mr. Sackville: This is a local matter for the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Greetham, chairman of the authority, for details.

Abortions

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many residents of Northern Ireland have obtained abortions in England and Wales in each year since 1968; and what is the total number.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is published for

1970 to 1973 in 'The Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales, Supplement on Abortion' (Table 15);
1974 to 1980 in 'Abortion Statistics', OPCS series AB nos. 1-7 (Table 6.11);
1981 to 1991 in 'Abortion Statistics' OPCS series AB nos. 8-18 (Table 25); and
1992 in 'Legal abortions 1992', OPCS Monitor AB 94/1 (Table 6).

Copies are available in the Library.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many overseas visits she and each of her Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many she, or each of her Ministers, participated in fundraising activities for the Conservative party; and if she will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Sackville: Health Ministers made nine overseas visits in their official capacity during the period. Fundraising activities for the Conservative party are not part of official duties.

Chief Executive Officers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of chief executive officers in the national health service now consider that the information available to them is adequate; what was the proportion in 1992; and what steps are being taken to improve and to monitor availability of information.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally. It is for local managers to ensure the availability of the information they require. The chief executive of the then national health service management executive emphasised their responsibility for the quality of such information in EL(93)117, copies of which are available in the Library.

Policy Initiatives

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates her Department has made as to the costs to industry of policy initiatives resulting from "The Health of the Nation".

Mr. Sackville: "The Health of the Nation" imposes no new requirements on industry. However there are clear benefits of improved competitiveness to be gained through improving the health of the workforce and we look forward to seeing those benefits realised.

Domiciliary Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to strengthen the guidelines in relation to recommendations for disregards arising from war pensions for the purpose of charges for domiciliary services under care in the community and the means-testing thereof.

Mr. Bowis: We have no plans to review the guidelines for domiciliary services provided for mentally ill people.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 July, *Official Report*, column *20*, what information she is prepared to publish on extra-contractual referrals and spending by region.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is not audited and therefore unsuitable for publication.

Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what savings were made by fundholders at the end of each financial year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: In the first year of the scheme, 1991-92, fundholders achieved efficiency savings of £14·5 million, equivalent to 3·6 per cent. of budgets set. Final audited figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are not yet available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the office costs allowance including computer costs given to each GP fundholder by region in each year since 1990-91;

(2) if she will list the start-up grants provided to potential fundholders by region in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholders there were in each region in each year since 1990-91; and what were the total allowances payments made to them in each region in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: The number of general practitioner fundholders by region in each year since 1991-92, the first year of the scheme, are shown in the table. Information about the management and computer allowances paid to them is not collected centrally.

Region	*Number of funds*			
	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Northern	27	38	69	84
Yorkshire	34	59	108	133
Trent	28	58	138	212
East Anglian	9	13	48	78
North West Thames	22	43	88	105
North East Thames	13	23	48	71

Region	Number of funds			
	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
South East Thames	15	28	77	143
South West Thames	21	39	66	116
Wessex	17	34	54	85
Oxford	25	46	74	107
South Western	20	38	69	100
West Midlands	26	58	131	219
Mersey	21	46	84	101
North Western	16	29	66	119
England	294	552	1,120	1,673

Blood Donations

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines have been issued relating to the donation of blood by veterans of nuclear tests.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority does not consider that such persons, in general, should be excluded from donating blood. The decision whether or not to accept such a person as a donor depends on the individual's own medical history.

Breast Feeding

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations and individuals have received funding from her Department in the last year to develop breast feeding initiatives; and what amounts were given.

Mr. Sackville: The Association of Breastfeeding Mothers, the Breastfeeding Promotion Group of the National Childbirth Trust, and La Leche League received funding, through section 64 grant aid, in 1993-94 in support of breast-feeding initiatives. The amounts given were, respectively, £12,500; £41,500 and £16,000.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's strategic plan in terms of breast feeding, weaning and infant nutrition.

Mr. Sackville: Our strategic plan is to continue to protect and promote breast feeding as the best way of feeding a baby and to ensure that up-to-date expert advice on breast feeding, weaning and infant nutrition, founded on the most reliable evidence and data is made available to health care professionals and the public.

Weaning

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Department will publish the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food report on weaning.

Mr. Sackville: The report is expected to be published later this year.

"The Health of the Nation"

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her estimate of the total cost of "The Health of the Nation" to her Department from its inception to date;

(2) how many full-time equivalent staff are engaged in work directly connected with "The Health of the Nation".

Mr. Sackville: Improving health through "The Health of the Nation" strategy is a key objective for the Department and for the national health service which underpins much of the work of the Department. It is therefore not feasible to identify either the total cost of the initiative to the Department of Health or the number of staff involved.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many publications have been issued in connection with the "The Health of the Nation"; and what was the total cost to her Department;

(2) what funds have been allocated by her Department and what grants awarded to organisations to develop activities and research in connection with the "The Health of the Nation" initiative.

(3) how many task force committees, working groups and project teams were established by her Department as part of the "The Health of the Nation" initiative; what are their titles; and what is the cost of manning each of them;

(4) what further publications her Department expects to issue in the coming year in connection with the "The Health of the Nation"; and what estimates she has as to the cost of producing these publications.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Conceptions

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the rate of conceptions for *(a)* under 16-year-olds, *(b)* under 17-year-olds and *(c)* under 18-year-olds in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Sackville: The rate of conceptions per 1,000 women in England and Wales for the latest available 15 years were:

Year	Age of woman		
	Under 16	Under 17	Under 18
1977	7·6	15·3	23·6
1978	7·6	15·6	24·5
1979	7·5	15·7	25·1
1980	7·2	14·8	23·8
1981	7·3	15·2	23·7
1982	7·8	15·5	23·9
1983	8·3	16·2	24·5
1984	8·7	17·1	26·3
1985	8·7	17·4	27·1
1986	8·8	17·4	27·5
1987	9·3	18·9	29·3
1988	9·4	19·2	30·2
1989	9·4	19·3	30·4
1990	10·1	19·7	30·7
1991	9·3	18·3	28·4

Rates are per 1,000 women aged 13-15 for the Under 16s, aged 13-16 for the Under 17s and aged 13-17 for the Under 18s.

Endangered Animals

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what investigations her Department has carried out into the use of parts of endangered animals by traditional Chinese or far eastern doctors practising in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not investigated this aspect of traditional Chinese or far eastern medicine. However, the Medicines Control Agency, which forms part of the Department of Health, is responsible for enforcing medicines legislation within the United Kingdom. It is an offence under the Medicines Act 1968 to import unlicensed medicinal products from China or elsewhere in the far east for sale or supply within the United Kingdom, except where the product has been requested by a registered practitioner on behalf of a particular patient of his. When products are brought to its attention which contravene or appear to contravene the Medicines Act, the agency investigates and takes appropriate action.

The agency is not presently aware that any unlicensed products, containing parts of endangered animals and for which medicinal claims are made, are being brought to or sold in the United Kingdom.

Travel Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 July, *Official Report,* column *21,* what information her Department maintains on the cost of travel by Department of Health and NHS executive staff between Leeds and London.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not record separately the costs of staff travel between Leeds and London.

Dental Services

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of people in Great Britain were registered with dentists in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Registration with a general dental practitioner was not required until October 1990 and information is not available centrally for 1979 and 1985. In May 1994, the latest date available, 57·41 per cent. of the population of Great Britain was registered with a general dental practitioner.

Violent Crime (Victims)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make arrangements to ensure that victims of violent crime who need dental treatment as a result of their injuries are included in the categories of people who are automatically entitled to free dental treatment;

(2) if she will make arrangements to ensure that victims of violent crime who need help with hospital travel costs as a result of their injuries are included in the categories of people who are automatically entitled to help with travel costs.

(3) if she will make arrangements to ensure that victims of violent crime who need NHS prescriptions as a result of their injuries are included in the categories of people who are automatically entitled to free prescriptions;

(4) if she will make arrangements to ensure that victims of violent crime who need a sight test or an NHS voucher for new spectacles as a result of their injuries are included in the categories of people who are automatically entitled to a free sight test or an NHS voucher for new spectacles.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so.

Child Care

Ms Ann Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulations govern *(a)* the placement of a child by a local authority on a fee-paying basis with two adults who are partners, and who are offering care for three children as a private children's home unregistrable under the Children Act 1989 and *(b)* the placement of a child by a local authority with two adults who are partners and are offering care for three children.

Mr. Bowis: Any placement of a child by a local authority under the Children Act is governed by the Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991, the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, the Representations Procedures (Children) Regulations 1991, the Contact with Children Regulations 1991 and the Definition of Independent Visitors (Children) Regulations 1991. In some circumstances, the Foster Placement (Children) Regulations 1991 also apply.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what target has been set for the compensation recovery unit for its operations for the current year.

Mr. Hague: There is no monetary target set for the compensation recovery unit. On the basis of past trends, it is estimated that recoveries for the current financial year will be almost £100 million. The unit has a target to issue certificates of total benefit paid within four weeks in at least 99·5 per cent. of cases it handles.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the income of the compensation recovery unit arises from cases involved *(a)* industrial disease, *(b)* medical negligence, *(c)* road traffic injury, *(d)* industrial injury and *(e)* other sources.

Mr. Hague: The administration of the compensation recovery unit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how much of the income under the Compensation Recovery Scheme arisesfrom industrial disease, medical negligence, road traffic injury, industrial injury and other sources.

The amounts recovered in the financial year 1993-94 are given below.

Category	Amount recovered £ million
Industrial injury	39·4
Road traffic injury	29·8
Medical negligence	4·9
Industrial disease	2·0
Other sources	5·8

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the disability living allowance unit to fulfil its target of responding to correspondence within 20 days.

Mr. Hague: The administration of the disability living allowance unit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking when he expects the Disability Living Allowance Unit to fulfil its target of responding to correspondence within 20 days.

I am pleased to say that in the period leading up to August 1993 the Disability Living Allowance Unit (DLAU) consistently achieved a 100% clearance rate for official correspondence within 20 days. As a result of this parameters for responding to such correspondence were tightened and a revised target for the DLAU to reply to all Official Correspondence within 15 days was first set in August 1993. The achievement of this revised target was first accomplished in September 1993. Most recently a level of 100% clearance of official correspondence direct from DLAU was achieved for the month ending 30 June 1994.

Whilst it is accepted that this revised target has not always been achieved it is set at a level which is believed to be both achievable and representative of a good customer service.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will issue guidelines to the disability living allowance unit concerning the establishment of target times for completing reviews in relation to appeal procedures on *(a)* outstanding mobility allowance and *(b)* current disability living allowance claims.

Mr. Hague: The Benefits Agency introduced performance targets for reviews and appeals preparation work in the disability living allowance unit in April 1992. The targets for 1994-95 are shown in the table, together with the latest available performance figures.

Mobility allowance was replaced by the mobility component of disability living allowance in April 1992 and all awards of that benefit were converted to disability living allowance. There are, therefore, no targets for mobility allowance reviews and appeals.

	Target per cent.	Performance[1] per cent.
Reviews primary target	60 in 55 days	81
Reviews secondary target	80 in 75 days	93
Appeals primary target	60 in 30 days	75
Appeals secondary target	90 in 60 days	90

[1] Figures for the month ending 30 June 1994.

Blind and Partially-sighted People

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what action he will take to encourage blind and partially-sighted persons to claim disability living allowance and attendance allowance following the House of Lords judgement of 21 April; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he will take to encourage blind and partially-sighted persons to request reviews of attendance allowance and disability living allowance claims, where these have been rejected following the House of Lords ruling of 21 April.

Mr. Hague: The Department has no plans to initiate any special action beyond the usual information services available. Major administrative disruption could be created in dealing with so many claims and reviews.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how adjudication officers will decide what activities blind and partially-sighted persons should undertake for the purposes of claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what provision is made for assistance for blind and partially-sighted people to undertake holidays and read books under guidelines set for disability living allowance and attendance allowance for adjudication officers.

Mr. Hague: Blind and partially-sighted people may undertake any activity they wish including holidays and literary pursuits. The independent adjudication authorities have to decide whether it is reasonable to meet the cost of such activities through non means-tested benefits like disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Disability and Attendance Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the *(a)* maximum, *(b)* minimum and *(c)* average times from date of claim to receipt of benefit where (i) there is no review, (ii) there is no appeal and (iii) there is an appeal for (1) disability living allowance and (2) attendance allowance.

Mr. Hague: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what are *(a)* maximum, *(b)* minimum and *(c)* average times from date of claim to receipt of benefit where (i) there is no review (ii) there is no appeal and (iii) there is an appeal for (1) Disability Living Allowance and (2) Attendance Allowance.

Data on maximum, minimum and average clearance times is not maintained. Instead performance is measured in terms of X% of cases cleared within Y days. Performance measurement is undertaken for the individual business areas of new claims, reviews and appeals. Actual performance is detailed in Annex 1 together with requisite targets.

Information supplied at Annex 1 for appeals only relates to the time taken for a submission to be sent to the Independent Tribunal service (ITS). A commitment has been given in the Charter Standard Statements of both the Disability Living Allowance

Unit (DLAU) and Attendance Allowance Unit (AAU), where this work is processed to make payment of benefit within 10 working days once the result of a successful appeal is received.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are currently working on *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* disability working allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance within the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Hague: The administration of disability living allowance, disability working allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of people currently working on Attendance Allowance (AA), Disability Working Allowance (DWA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The table below gives the numbers of staff currently working on DWA, AA and DLA. Disability Benefits centres (DBCs) deal with claims for both DLA and AA. It is not possible to allocate staffing by benefit for these centres as the same staff can work on both benefits.

A staffing breakdown has been provided for the AA Unit (AAU) and the DLA Unit (DLAU). It should be noted, however, that there are some staff who work in the DLAU who have responsibilities for both benefit areas. Common support areas such as personnel fall into this category.

	Number
DWA	75
AAU	619
DLAU	1,848
DBCs	1,450

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been issued to Benefits Agency adjudication officers following the House of Lords judgment of 21 April concerning Mr. Eric Mallinson.

Mr. Hague: The Chief Adjudication Officer issued guidance to adjudication officers on 12 May 1994. In addition, the Benefits Agency has issued two bulletins. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures to show the time elapsed from an application for appeal and appeal date in claims for *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance.

Mr. Hague: I am informed by His Honour Judge Thorpe, president of the independent tribunal service, that on disability living allowance the average time from lodgement of an appeal to the hearing is 26 weeks, for attendance allowance the time is 28 weeks.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if seeing is treated as a bodily function for the purposes of disability living allowance and attendance allowance claims.

Mr. Hague: The Law Lords ruled on 21 April that seeing is treated as a bodily function for the purposes of establishing entitlement to disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Below-average Incomes (Statistics)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish information on the same basis as table A.4 of the households below-average income series giving figures for the 4 and 5 quintiles in 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures on the same basis as table A.3 of the households below-average income series giving figures for the top five deciles for 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988-89, 1990-91, and 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

Share of total income received by individuals in top 50 per cent., 40 per cent., 30 per cent., 20 per cent., and 10 per cent., of the United Kingdom income distribution (including self-employed)

Before housing costs — *Per cent.*

	1979	*1981*	*1987*	*1988-89*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Share of total income of:						
Top 50	67	68	71	72	73	73
Top 40	58	59	62	63	64	64
Top 30	47	48	51	52	53	54
Top 20	35	36	39	40	41	41
Top 10	21	21	24	25	26	26

After housing costs — *Per cent.*

	1979	*1981*	*1987*	*1988-89*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Share of total income of:						
Top 50	68	69	72	73	75	75
Top 40	58	60	63	64	65	66
Top 30	48	49	52	53	55	55
Top 20	35	36	40	41	43	43
Top 10	21	22	25	26	27	27

Notes:

1. The figures are based on net equivalised household income.
2. The figures are estimates based on the Family Expenditure Survey. 1988-89, 1990-91 and 1991-92 are the respective calendar years combined.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish information on the same basis as table A.1 of the households below-average income analysis, giving figures for the top five decile groups for *(a)* 1990-91 to 1991-92 and *(b)* 1979 to 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: The information for 1990-91 to 1991-92 is given in the table. All figures are estimates and subject to sampling error.

The information for 1979 to 1991-92 can be found on page 148 of "Households Below Average Income 1979 to 1991-92", a copy of which is in the Library.

Change in real income for top five decile groups, 1990-91 to 1991-92 (including self employed)

percentage change

	Decile 6 50-60 per cent.	*Decile 7 60-70 per cent.*	*Decile 8 70-80 per cent.*	*Decile 9 80-90 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*
BHC	(0)	0	0	(0)	(0)
AHC	(1)	0	(1)	(1)	(0)

Change in real income for top five decile groups, 1990-91 to 1991-92, excluding self-employed

percentage change

	Decile 6 50-60 per cent.	*Decile 7 60-70 per cent.*	*Decile 8 70-80 per cent.*	*Decile 9 80-90 per cent.*	*Decile 10 Top 10 per cent.*
BHC	(0)	0	0	(1)	(0)
AHC	(1)	0	(1)	(1)	(1)

Notes:

1. Small changes from 1990-91 to 1991-92 are unlikely to be significant.
2. Figures in brackets are particularly uncertain; the range in which the true change lies is greater than +/–2·5 percentage points and greater than 30 per cent. of the estimate.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest whole per cent.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to publish the departmental memo produced by his Department outlining proposals for the operation of the new independent living fund.

Mr. Hague: I am not aware of such a memo.

Social Security Recipients (Travel Costs)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to amend current social security legislation allowing those in receipt of social security moneys to have their travel costs reimbursed in full when attending magistrates courts.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to do so.

Child Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the target savings for the current and three succeeding financial years to be achieved by a switch of existing and new claimants of child benefit to payment by credit transfer.

Mr. Burt: The administration of child benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the target savings for the current, and three succeeding financial years, to be achieved by a switch of existing and new claimants of child benefit to payment by credit transfer.

Individual benefits were not set targets for savings to be achieved by transfer to automated credit transfer (ACT). Targets were set in terms of the percentage increase in ACT take-up to be achieved by 1995-96 and for Child Benefit this was 3 per cent.

ACT take-up was 23·9 per cent. of existing Child Benefit cases and 41·8 per cent. of new claims as at May 1994.

I hope you find this reply.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables showing the administrative costs of administering child benefit in each of the past five years with an estimate for the current year; if he will set out the administration costs represented by payments to *(a)* the Post Office and *(b)* financial institutions for passing over the benefit; what was the total number of recipients each year; and how many recipients received child benefit through (i) post offices and (ii) other financial institutions by credit transfer.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table. The estimated total administration costs for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are not yet available. Costs for 1993-94 will be published in the 1995 departmental report and those for 1994-95 will be published in the 1996 departmental report.

The information relating to payments made to the Post Office and other financial institutions is commercial-in-confidence.

Child benefit

Year	*Estimated total administration cost*[1]	*Estimated average number of recipients in year*	*Number of recipients paid at post office*		*Number of recipients paid by automatic credit transfer*	
	£m	*000s*	*000s*	*Per cent.*	*000s*	*Per cent.*
1989-90	111	6,735	5,772	85·7	963	14·3
1990-91	107	6,715	5,459	81·3	1,256	18·7
1991-92	118	6,760	5,408	80·0	1,352	20·0

Year	Estimated total administration cost[1]	Estimated average number of recipients in year	Number of recipients paid at post office		Number of recipients paid by automatic credit transfer	
	£m	000s	000s	Per cent.	000s	Per cent.
1992-93	136	6,897	5,435	78·8	1,462	21·2
1993-94	n/a	6,948	5,392	77·6	1,556	22·4
1994-95	n/a	7,048	5,371	76·2	1,677	23·8

[1] Source departmental reports 1991-94

Child Support Agency

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to invite claims for maintenance from the lone parents who have been on income support since before April last year following his announcement of the reordering of the Child Support Agency's priorities by which they will not now be dealt with as was originally planned.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Mr. Frank Field, dated 21 July 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Child Support Agency's take on stategy in relation to parents with care who were already receiving Income Support in April 1993.

As explained in "The First Two Years", it is planned to reduce the take-on of 100,000 existing income support cases from 1994-95 to 1995-96 in order to allow the Agency to concentrate on clearing its backlog of work. It is envisaged that the 100,000 cases so deferred will be taken on in the first half of 1995-96.

This deferral will not affect the commitment given by Ministers to provide sympathetic consideration to requests by individual parents who wish their application to be dealt with early. In April and May the Agency accepted 2,400 such requests.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the results of the six areas of performance activity monitored by the Child Support Agency during 1993-94, as mentioned in paragraph 6.3 of the agency's business plan for that year.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 21 July 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the areas of performance monitored by the Child Support Agency.

Information on the time taken to clear applications for maintenance was contained on page 5 of the Agency's combined annual report and business plan—*the first two years*. In the five other areas selected for performance monitoring insufficient cases were processed and insufficient data collected to provide a meaningful indication of the standard of service in these areas.

The Agency has taken action to improve its information systems and to collect the data required to enable an expanded range of targets to be considered for 1995-96.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many deductions from earnings orders were made by the Child Support Agency in the year 1993-94; and what proportion of these were in relation to interim assessments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Mr. Jonathan Evans dated 21 July 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about deduction from earnings orders.

In the year 1993-94, 2,200 deductions from earnings orders were made by the Child Support Agency. I regret that this number cannot be split between those orders issued in respect of interim maintenance assessments and full maintenance assessments. It may help if I explain that until nearly the end of the year there were no powers in the child support legislation that would allow the agency to impose a Deductions from Earnings Order, normally the first course of action where payment is not being made to the parent with care, in cases in which an Interim Maintenance Assessment has been made. Regulations that gave the Agency powers to do this came into effect on 7 February 1994.

I can confirm, however, that the Agency now gathers such information and figures for the current year will become available in August.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the maintenance with which the Child Support Agency had an involvement was *(a)* child maintenance assessed by the agency but paid direct between parents, *(b)* child maintenance assessed and collected by the agency, *(c)* child maintenance paid where there had been no assessment from the agency and *(d)* other maintenance payments.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 21 July 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the amount of child maintenance collected by the Child Support Agency.

For the period April 1993 to March 1994 inclusive, maintenance administered by the Agency totalled £312 million. Of this, £1·9 million was assessed by the Agency and paid direct between parents and £13·1 million was assessed and paid through the Agency collection service. The remaining £297 million related to cases administered by the Agency arising from pre-Agency arrangements.

There were no other maintenance payments collected.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of *(a)* the number

of absent parents who are in arrears with child support payments and *(b)* the collective amount of maintenance currently outstanding;

(2) how many arrears notices were served by the Child Support Agency in its first year of operation;

(3) how many liability orders were issued by the Child Support Agency in 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Mr. Jonathan Evans, dated 21 July 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about arrears notices, liability orders and maintenance outstanding.

I regret that validated data on accounts in arrears is not currently available. The Child Support Computer System, however, is being upgraded to provide additional information.

Although the specific information you request about arrears notices is not available, additional information provided by the upgraded system will indicate those cases in which such orders will have been issued.

It is estimated that about 160 liability orders had been referred to the courts by the end of March 1994.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many requests for maintenance review on the grounds of change of circumstances were dealt with by the Child Support Agency in its first year; and how many such requests were still outstanding at year end;

(2) how many requests for review of a decision made by a child support officer were decided during 1993-94; and how many such decisions were outstanding at year end.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) on 17 May 1994 at column *526*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what period was covered by the most recent annual reviews of individual child support assessments.

Mr. Burt: Individual assessments are reviewed when they have been in force for 52 weeks; the review will be completed as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of that period.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what statutory duties of a child support officer he claims a discretion to exercise; and what is the legal basis for this discretion;

(2) which of his statutory duties a child support officer has discretion to exercise; and what is the legal basis for this discretion.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act 1991 confers statutory duties on the Secretary of State. It also confers statutory duties on independent, adjudicating officers, the child support officers. Decisions taken by CSOs cannot be varied by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; CSOs cannot take decisions in those areas which are the responsibility of the Secretary of State.

The Act specifies where a discretionary power exists and whether the Secretary of State or a CSO should exercise that power. The areas in which the Secretary of State has discretion relate mainly to the requirement on a parent with care to authorise the Secretary of State to take action to pursue maintenance and to the collection and enforcement of maintenance, including whether to collect and enforce and the method of collection and enforcement. The areas in which CSOs have discretion are mainly in the making of interim maintenance assessments and reduced benefit directions.

Reduced Earnings Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated saving to his Department from the proposed changes to reduced earnings allowance from October.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. The abolition of reduced earnings allowance in October 1990 was expected to produce savings of around £80 million by 1993-94. This figure will be reduced by the cost of claims now payable because of a defect in the legislation as referred to in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 30 June at columns *709-10*.

Crime Victims

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that persons unable to work because of a criminal injury will be able to claim sickness benefit followed by invalidity benefit in the same way as persons who have had an accident at work or contracted an industrial disease, even if they have not paid sufficient, or any, national insurance contributions.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to exempt victims of crime from the contribution conditions for sickness benefit.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make arrangements to ensure that victims of violent crime, who are disabled by their injuries receive disablement benefit, even when they are not employed earners, in the same way as if the injury had been caused by an accident at work.

Mr. Hague: The criminal injuries compensation scheme provides payment from public funds to victims of violent crime. The industrial injuries scheme provides benefits for employed earners disabled in the course of their employment. There are no plans to extend the industrial injuries scheme.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that victims of crimes of violence who become unemployed as a result of their injuries will receive sufficient credits for national insurance contributions to enable them to receive full unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: Credits are awarded for each week for which medical evidence of incapacity for work is provided. While such credits will assist a person to qualify for unemployment benefit, that person must also have paid a specified number of contributions as an employed earner, class 1, in the two relevant tax years.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make arrangements to ensure that the full rate of widow's pension is paid to all women widowed as a result of murder or manslaughter regardless of their age.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to do so.

Social Security Review

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's review of social security.

Mr. Hague: We launched the fundamental review of social security last spring. Last year, we published "The Growth of Social Security", which described recent developments in social security and gave projections of expenditure growth to the end of the century. Subsequently, at the time of the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a number of major changes concerning incapacity benefit, statutory sick pay, benefits for the unemployed and the future equalisation of state pension age. Changes in the first two areas have now been enacted by Parliament and we plan to introduce legislation on the other areas in due course.

We are continuing to keep the social security programme under review to ensure that vulnerable people are protected, and that the benefits system does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay for it.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many overseas visits he and each of his Ministers have made between 1 January and 30 June; during how many he, or each of his Ministers, participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; and if he will name the Ministers and the countries in which these activities took place.

Mr. Lilley: Two of the Department's Ministers made overseas visits during the period 1 January 1994 to 30 June 1994. The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People made a visit to Norway and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) made visits to Luxembourg, twice, and to Canada and the United States of America.

Fund-raising activities for the Conservative party are not part of our official duties.

Disability

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements exist for benefits to disabled people to continue if they decide to accompany their families to live abroad.

Mr. Hague: Sickness benefit, invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance may be paid for up to the first 26 weeks of a person's absence from the United Kingdom if the absence is temporary, the person has remained incapable of work, and either the person has gone abroad for the specific purpose of receiving treatment for an incapacity which began before the person left this country, or the person was continuously incapable of work for at least six months up to the date before the absence began, or, for SB and IVB only, the incapacity for work is the result of an industrial accident or prescribed disease.

Attendance allowance or disability living allowance may be paid during a temporary stay abroad for up to six months. It may be paid for longer if the absence is for the specific purpose of getting treatment for the illness or disabling condition.

Special provisions exist to assist members of the immediate family of forces personnel to receive these benefits overseas.

Industrial injuries disablement pension may be paid indefinitely to a person who leaves the United Kingdom to reside abroad.

In addition, the above benefits may be paid indefinitely if the disabled person is going to another European Economic Area country, provided that the EC regulations on social security for migrant workers apply in their case, or if he goes to a country with which we have a social security convention which provides for this.

Income support cannot be paid abroad. However, special rules may allow disabled people to be paid in respect of the first four weeks of a temporary absence, on their return to the United Kingdom Housing benefit may be paid during a temporary absence not exceeding 52 weeks, again subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions.

Residence Qualification

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons, nationals of the Irish Republic, claiming social security benefit in the year 1993-94, would have been ineligible if the not habitually resident regulation had applied to their claim.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each change to social security benefits since 1979, with the amount of savings or expenditure for each change *(a)* at the original figure and *(b)* uprated to 1994 prices.

Mr. Hague: The main developments in social security since the second world war—together with details of expenditure by benefit since 1979—are set out in "The Growth of Social Security" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published last year.

Industrial Injury Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each change to the eligibility conditions for benefits under the industrial injuries scheme since 1979.

Mr. Hague: The main changes were:

1983 Injury Benefit abolished and the qualifying period for Disablement Benefit reduced from 26 weeks to 15 weeks;
1986 Threshold for Disablement Benefit raised to 14 per cent. (except for certain respiratory diseases for which the threshold remained at 1 per cent.);
Reduced Earnings Allowance introduced to replace Special Hardship Allowance;
1987 Unemployability Supplement and Hospital Treatment Allowance abolished;
1988 Industrial Death Benefit abolished;
1989 Retirement Allowance (RA) introduced to replace Reduced Earnings Allowance (REA) when a person of pension age gives up regular employment;
1990 REA and RA abolished from 1 October.

Automatic Benefit Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to invite tenders for the supply of automatic benefits cash payments; whether he proposes

to make changes for the use of automatic benefit payments machines; and whether the location of such machines will be confined to premises which are part of the Post Office Counters network.

Mr. Hague: The Benefits Agency is exploring options to involve the private sector in the project to automate the payment of benefits through post offices. This project will involve linking post offices with the Benefits Agency to enable the positive authorisation of benefits at the point of payment, but transactions will still be carried out by post office clerks. We have no plans to instal automatic teller machines in post offices or elsewhere to pay benefits. The question of charges for machines does not therefore apply.

War Pension Appeals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war pension appeals are currently outstanding in the northern region; and if he will publish a breakdown of the length of time for which these appeals have been outstanding.

Mr. Hague: I understand from Mr. Peter Mathison, the chief executive of the War Pensions Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how people aged *(a)* between 65 and 74, *(b)* between 75 and 84 and *(c)* over 85 years of age in receipt of income support live in each of post code areas SK1 to SK8 in the metropolitan borough of Stockport.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Andrew Bennett, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about pensioners in particular age groups in specified postal districts of Stockport.

Unfortunately the information you have requested is not available. We do not routinely collect statistics on Income Support (IS) customers in a way which would enable me to provide the details you require for postal districts SK1 to SK8. The information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. To obtain the information would entail an examination of every case in the Stockport area; currently 24,709 cases.

However, I am able to give you the number of Income Support customers aged 60 and over who are in receipt of various pensioner premiums from the Stockport Benefits Agency District. The District covers a larger area than SK1 to SK8. Some customers of 60 years of age and over may be in other statistical groups, such as those in nursing or residential care homes. These customers do not receive the pensioner premiums and will therefore not be included in these figures. The latest information available is for 30 June 1994 and is in the attached appendix.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Persons by age group in receipt of a pensioner premium in Stockport District.

	Number
Customer or partner 80 or over receiving higher pensioner premium	2,906
Customer or partner under 80 receiving higher pensioner premium	630
Customer or partner aged 75-79 receiving enhanced pensioner premium	1,006
Customer or partner aged 60-74 receiving pensioner premium	3,023

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects benefit cases deferred pending decisions on the Thomas case to be resolved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Benefit cases affected by the ruling of the European Court in the case of Thomas are being considered on an ongoing basis; any arrears due are being awarded and paid.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants are registered at the Chesterfield, Buxton, Ilkeston, Derby (Beckett Street), Derby (London Road) and Sutton Benefits Agency offices as at March 1994; and how many at each of these were *(a)* income support claimants signing on as unemployed, *(b)* pensioners, *(c)* income support claimants receiving a lone parent premium, *(d)* those receiving a disability premium, *(e)* those receiving a carer's premium and *(f)* those receiving a severe disability premium.

Mr. Burt: Further to his letter of 21 June 1994 Mr. Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, has written again to the hon. Member with corrected information.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 21 July 1994:

I am writing, further to my reply to your recent Parliamentary Question, about the number of income support recipients in each client group in the Derbyshire area (OR. Col. 184-185). Unfortunately, due to a clerical error, some of the information supplied to you in respect of the Buxton, Chesterfield and Ilkeston Benefit Agency offices was inaccurate. I have appended below the corrected information.

	Number
Buxton Office	
Unemployed cases	855
Pensioner premium	982
Lone parent premium	351
Disability premium	201
Chesterfield Office	
Lone parent premium	2,948
Disability premium	1,766
Ilkeston Office	
Unemployed cases	5,160

I hope you find this reply helpful and please accept my apologies for any inconvenience that this error may have caused.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of people claiming income support in Scotland by *(a)* gender and *(b)* age for the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Income support recipients in Scotland by age and gender

Age of the claimant	*Men 000s*	*Women 000s*
16-19	16	15
20-29	75	68
30-39	51	47
40-49	36	26
50-59	28	21
60-69	26	27
70-79	11	43
80 and above	11	52
All Ages	255	297

Notes:
1. Source: Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry August 1993.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. The figures show the number of recipients at the time of the Enquiry. They do not include partners or dependants.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance has been issued to adjudication officers for the purpose of interpreting SI, 1994, No. 1004, amending schedule 3 of the Income Support (General) Regulations, if increased housing costs are not reflected in income support levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: A memorandum to the adjudication officers' guide was issued. The contents of the memorandum will be incorporated into the adjudication officers' guide from September 1994.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what income support will be payable where a person has joint and several liability for a mortgage, is unmarried and is entitled to benefit where a person with income leaves the mortgaged property and all the housing costs are met by the claimant.

Mr. Burt: An income support claimant who has joint and several liability for a mortgage can receive help with all the eligible housing costs for the home if he or she becomes responsible for meeting them all.

Pension

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase the pension supplement for 80-year-olds.

Mr. Hague: The 25p age addition to state retirement pension paid to people who are over 80 was introduced in 1971. No Government have increased the age addition since its introduction and there are no plans to do so.

Subject Access Requests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many subject access requests were received by his Department in the last year; what estimate he has as to the percentage of those requests which were enforced subject access requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Department has received a total of 14,059 subject access requests to the year ending 30 June 1994. It is estimated that 90 per cent. of the 13,109 subject access requests made of the national insurance recording system are of the type that have become known as enforced subject access requests. I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 18 July at columns *50-51.*

Housing Benefit

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost to each local authority of its disregard scheme in relation to housing benefit for war disablement and war widow's pensions in the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* in total and *(b)* per head of population in that area.

Mr. Hague: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total spent in housing benefit for each year since 1989.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Housing benefit expenditure

£ million

Year	*Number*
1988-89	3,773
1989-90	4,282
1990-91	4,942
1991-92	5,997
1992-93	7,604
[1]1993-94	8,821

[1] Estimate.
Source: Social Security Departmental Report—March 1994.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total housing benefit paid in respect of private rented properties in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what is the predicted figure for 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Year	*1992-93 outturn £ million*	*1993-94 estimated outturn £ million*	*1994-95 plans £ million*
Total housing benefit paid in respect of private rented properties	3,257	3,817	4,320

Source: Social Security Departmental Report—March 1994.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of people claiming housing benefit in Scotland in the first quarter of each year since 1990.

Mr. Hague: The information is as follows:

Thousands

Date	*Housing benefit recipients*
February 1990	563
February 1991	540
February 1992	543
February 1993	550
February 1994	553

Data source:
The housing benefit management information system quarterly caseload count of February in each year.
Notes:
1. The figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and are for benefit units. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple.
2. Estimates are included for non-responding authorities.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the annual estimated cost of total housing benefit expenditure in 1994-95 if the average rent paid by recipients was £72 per week.

Mr. Hague: The estimated outturn for 1994-95 on current rent levels is £10 billion. It is estimated that an average rent of £72 would increase expenditure by a further £10 billion. The latest statistics show that the average local authority rent is £34 and the average private sector rent is £50.[1]

[1] *Source:* Local authority quarterly statistical returns February 1994.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications the Festival Park Benefits Agency office, Stoke on Trent has received in respect of chronic bronchitis and emphysema; and of those, how many have *(a)* been accepted on first application, *(b)* been refused, *(c)* gone to appeal and *(d)* been accepted following an appeal.

Mr. Hague: The administration of industrial injuries disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Joan Walley, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about how many applications for chronic bronchitis and emphysema the Festival Park Benefits Agency Office, Stoke on Trent has received and of those how many have *(a)* been accepted on first application, *(b)* been refused, *(c)* gone to appeal and *(d)* been accepted following appeal.

Firstly I should like to explain that all questions arising on claims for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) are decided by independent adjudicating authorities. Lay questions are decided by an Adjudication Officer (AO) and, on appeal, by a Social Security Appeal Tribunal (SSAT). Generally speaking, medical questions are decided first by an Adjudicating Medical Authority (AMA) and, on appeal, by a Medical Appeal Tribunal (MAT). In prescribed disease claims, however, the first of the medical questions, ie. the diagnosis question, my be disallowed by an AO based on medical evidence; in that event, the customer can appeal, first to an AMA and then to a MAT.

The information you ask for is not available in the format requested. This is because Festival Park Benefits Agency Office is a medical boarding centre for respiratory diseases MBC(RD) and can only provide figures relating to medical questions. The attached table gives statistics which relate to the Benefits Agency's North Staffordshire District which covers Stoke on Trent North, Stoke on Trent South and Newcastle Staffordshire.

The figures have been obtained from a 100 per cent. count.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Chronic bronchitis and emphysema—North Staffordshire District

Claims information to 17 July 1994	*Numbers*
Claims received	1,736
Disallowed on prescription[1]	113
Disallowed on medical grounds[2]	1,241
Assessed at 14 per cent. or over[3]	196
Number of appeals on prescription	9
Succesful	0
Unsuccessful	0
Number of appeals to Medical Appeal Tribunals	30
Successful	0
Unsuccesful	0
Numbeg of appeals to Special Medical Boards	174
Successful	11
Unsuccessful	117

[1] Claims disallowed on prescription are those where the customer has not worked underground in a coal mine for a period of at least 20 years.

[2] Claims disallowed on medical advice include customers:
with insufficient lung function loss;
where category 1 pneumoconiosis has not been diagnosed and;
Where chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema has not been diagnosed.

[3] Claims assessed at 14 per cent. or more will result in an award of benefit.

Note: Not all claims/appeals received will have been decided by 17 July 1994.

411. **Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that all X-rays used in evidence in respect of claims from miners for chronic bronchitis and emphysema to be soft and not hard exposure X-rays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council recommended the use of the International Labour Organisation classification for chest radiography in deciding claims for chronic bronchitis and emphysema. The ILO classification is used extensively throughout the world and is generally accepted as an appropriate measure of coal dust retention.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reconsider the criteria for eligibility to industrial injuries disablement benefit arising from chronic bronchitis and emphysema; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Government are advised on the prescription of diseases under the industrial injuries scheme by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, an independent body of experts. We accepted and implemented in full the council's recommendations on the terms of prescription of chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners as a disease for which industrial injuries disablement benefit can be paid.

The council plans to review the situation after a suitable period of operation.

Benefits (Budgets)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total budget for *(a)* benefit take-up campaigns and *(b)* benefit fraud detection in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The total amount spent on take up campaigns in the 1993-94 financial year was approximately £5·2 million.

The total amount spent on fraud detection in the 1992-93 financial year was approximately £72 million. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the Benefits Agency offices in England, with the name of the manager, show the number of persons employed and the number of claimants receiving benefit through these offices.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from, Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 21 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking if he will list all the Benefits Agency offices in England together with the name of the manager, the number of staff employed and the number of persons receiving benefit from each office.

I have attached at Table 1 information relating to each Benefits Agency District giving each managers name and the most recent staff in post figures. At Table 2 I have provided details of the numbers of people receiving benefit in each District. However, it should be noted that a person may be in receipt of more than one benefit at any one time and may therefore appear in these figures more than once.

These tables have been placed in the Library as one document under the heading Department of Social Security, Benefits Agency, Staff in Post and Numbers Receiving Benefit by Benefits Agency District in England.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Annex 1

Statistics for respective business areas are provided for month ending June 1994. Figures in brackets are year to date (YTD) achievement.

Business area	*Targets*	*Performance Per cent.*
DLA claims—Normal Rules	Primary—68 per cent. in 30 days	72 (75)
	Secondary—85 per cent. in 53 days	94 (95)
DLA Claims—Special Rules	80 per cent. in 10 days	91 (92)
DLA Reviews	Primary—60 per cent. in 55 days	81 (84)
	Secondary—80 per cent. in 75 days	93 (94)
DLA Appeals	Primary—60 per cent. in 30 days	75 (75)
	Secondary—90 per cent. in 60 days	90 (91)
AA Claims—Normal Rules	Primary—60 per cent. in 35 days	76 (82)
	Secondary—90 per cent. in 60 days	97 (97)
AA Claims—Special Rules	80 per cent. in 10 days	89 (86)
AA Reviews	Primary—60 per cent. in 61 days	83 (89)
	Secondary 85 per cent. in 81 days	95 (97)
AA Appeals	Primary—70 per cent. in 28 days	79 (89)
	Secondary—95 per cent. in 89 days	100 (99)

Independent Tribunal Service

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are employed by the independent tribunal service; and what is their current case load for *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance appeal cases.

Mr. Hague: I am informed that the independent tribunal service employs 868 full-time staff. The information regarding caseload is not available in the form requested. The current caseload of the disability appeal tribunals, which hear appeals against disability living allowance and attendance allowance is 13,291.

D. Gale

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column 147, on the case of D. Gale, when the president of the independent tribunal service will write to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford.

Mr. Burt: I understand from the president of the independent tribunal service that a reply was sent to the hon. Member on 20 July.

Benefits (Young People)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in receipt of benefit in each month since January 1988.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not held centrally. However, the table shows the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of income support. This includes both those who are paid under the severe hardship provision and those who have automatic entitlement subject to the normal rules (eg lone parents).

In addition, 16 and 17-year-olds may be entitled to other benefits including housing benefit, severe disability allowance, child benefit and others.

Number of 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of income support

	Aged 16	*Aged 17*	*Total*
May 1988	32,000	69,000	101,000
May 1989	5,000	13,000	18,000
May 1990	4,000	17,000	21,000
May 1991	6,000	16,000	22,000
May 1992	8,000	22,000	30,000
May 1993	9,000	26,000	35,000
August 1993	9,000	27,000	36,000

Notes:
1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Figures have been taken from the Annual Statistical Enquiries from 1988-1992 and from the Quarterly Enquiries of May and August 1993.

Belling Group

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the nedd to tighten the regulation of company pension schemes from former employees of the Belling Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Member wrote in May expressing concerns about some aspects of the arrangements for winding up the Belling pension plan. This Department has also received letters on the subject. I am confident that our proposals for changes to the legislation affecting occupational pension schemes set out in the White Paper, "Security, Equality, Choice: the Future for Pensions", Cm 2594, will reduce the prospect of similar concerns arising in future.

Widowers' Benefits

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will change the DSS regulations to enable a widower to receive exactly the same entitlement to benefits as a widow.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to do so.

Disallowed Benefit Claims

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for invalidity benefit and disability premium were disallowed in each quarter since mid-1993; how many appeals against refusal of such benefits were successful and how many unsuccessful; and what the comparable quarterly figures were for the previous two years.

Mr. Hague: Information is not available in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Benefits for incapacity: disallowances following reference to the Benefits Agency medical service[1]

Quarter ending	*Disallowances*[2]
30 June 1993	15,000
30 September 1993	21,000
31 December 1993	18,000

[1] Includes sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, and people claiming these benefits but receiving only national insurance credits with or without income support.
[2] Based on a 5 per cent. sample of cases referred to the Benefits Agency Medical Service, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Appeals decided by social security appeal tribunals: invalidity benefit

Quarter ending	*Appeals head and decided*	*Successful*	*Unsuccessful*
30 September 1991	1,107	570	537
31 December 1991	1,240	622	618
31 March 1992	1,474	748	726
30 June 1992	1,311	681	630
30 September 1992	1,236	670	566
31 December 1992	1,367	757	610
31 March 1993	1,436	782	654
30 June 1993	1,800	931	869
30 September 1993	2,961	1,628	1,333
31 December 1993	3,225	1,865	1,360

Rent Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients there were of rent allowance housing benefit in private rented properties at 31 March 1992, 31 March 1993 and 31 March 1994; what was the average rent of such properties; and what was the average rent allowance being paid.

Mr. Hague: The available information for Great Britain is in the table.

Date	*Rent allowance receipts* [1,2] *Thousands*	*Average eligible rent* [2] *£*	*Average rent allowance* [2] *£*
May 1992	1,292	42·20	38·39
May 1993	1,480	46·62	43·13
February 1994	1,619	49·59	45·99

Data source:
The housing benefit management information system quarterly caseload data for May 1992 and 1993 and February 1994, the latest date for which information is available.

Notes:
[1] The number of recipients includes those in housing association and other privately rented properties, is rounded to the nearest one thousand and relates to benefit units. A benefit unit may be a couple or a single person.
[2] Estimates are included for non-responding authorities.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the change, in real terms, in the value of each disability benefit payable to an individual from its inception to the present date or until it was merged into other benefits, as appropriate.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the tables.

Attendance allowance (See note (1))

Level	*Higher*	*Lower*
Date of inception	6 December 1971	4 June 1973
Rate at inception	£4·80	£3·60
Current rate (1994-95 prices)	£45·70	£30·55
Real terms cash increase (1994-95 prices)	£12·57	£8·59
Percentage real terms increase	38	39·1

Mobility allowance (See note (2))

	£
Date of inception 1 January 1976	
Rate at inception	5·00
Rate when last paid in 1991-92	29·10
Real terms cash increase from inception to 1991-92	12·30
Percentage real terms increase from inception to 1991-92	63·90

Disability living allowance

Component and level	*Rate of benefit from inception in April 1992* *£*	*Current rate of benefit in April 1994* *£*	*Real terms cash increase from inception to 1994-95* *£*	*Real terms percentage increase from inception to 1994-95*
Care component				
Higher	43·35	45·70	0·66	1·5
Middle	28·95	30·55	0·47	1·6
Lower	11·55	12·15	0·15	1·3
Mobility component				

Component and level	Rate of benefit from inception in April 1992 £	Current rate of benefit in April 1994 £	Real terms cash increase from inception to 1994-95 £	Real terms percentage increase from inception to 1994-95
Highest	30·30	31·95	0·47	1·5
Lowest	11·55	12·15	0·15	1·3

Disability working allowance (see note 3)

	Rate of allowance/ applicable amount from inception in April 1992 (£)	Current rate of allowance/ applicable amount in April 1994 (£)	Real increase in rate of allowance/ applicable amount (£)	Percentage real increase in allowance/ applicable amount
Adult allowance				
Single person	42·40	46·05	1·38	3·1
Couple or lone parent	58·80	63·75	1·80	2·9
Child allowances				
Age under 11	10·40	11·20	0·24	2·2
Age 11-15	17·25	18·55	0·38	2·1
Age 16-17	21·45	23·05	0·45	2·0
Age 18	29·90	32·20	0·70	2·2
Applicable amounts				
Single person	39·95	43·00	0·91	2·2
Couple or lone parent	66·60	71·70	1·53	2·2

Notes:

(1) Attendance allowance was replaced from April 1992 by the care component of disability living allowance for people disabled before age 65.

(2) Mobility allowance was replaced from April 1992 by the mobility component of disability living allowance.

(3) Disability working allowance was introduced in April 1992 for people aged 16 or over who are working 16 hours a week or more and have an illness or disability which puts them at a disadvantage in getting a job. The amount of DWA payable depends on the make up of the family and the income and capital. The table shows the value of the allowances and the applicable amounts in April 1992 and April 1994, and the real terms increases over the period.

(4) The retail price index has been used to calculate the real terms cash and percentage increases for attendance allowance, mobility allowance and disability living allowance. ROSSI (RPI less housing costs) has been used to calculate the corresponding figures for disability working allowance.

Restart

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have had their benefit cut for failure to attend a restart course in Great Britain (i) as a whole and (ii) in each region.

Mr. Burt: The available information which does not include a breakdown by gender, is in the table.

Unemployed claimants who received a reduced personal rate of income support following failure to attend or complete a Restart course during the period April 1991 to March 1994

Area	Number of reductions
Anglia	1,900
Chilterns	2,000
South London and West Sussex	2,400
West Country	1,600
East London and Essex	1,300
South East	2,000
Wessex	3,000
East Midlands	1,500
Midlands and South West	600
West Mercia	1,600
Wales	1,500
Merseyside	1,400
Greater Manchester	2,800
Lancashire and Cumbria	3,600
Tyne Tees	3,100
South Yorkshire and Humberside	2,000
North and West Yorkshire	1,800
Scotland and Northern	3,200
North, Central and West Scotland	1,600
East of Scotland	3,100
TOTAL	42,000

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 100, and are subject to amendment.

Household Incomes

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the change in real incomes by decile group, 1979 to 1991-92, including the self-employed, before and after housing costs, following table A1 and appendix 10 of the latest households below average income report; and what was the equivalised and unequivalised income per household in each decile group, for households with children;

(2) what was the average equivalent income at April 1994 prices for *(a)* the poorest 10 per cent. and *(b)* the poorest 20 per cent. from the latest housing below average income analysis, before and after housing costs in 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988 to 1989, 1990-91 and 1991-92 for (i) a pensioner couple, (ii) a single pensioner, (iii) a couple with children, (iv) a couple without children, (v) a single adult with children and (vi) a single adult without children;

(3) how many children were in households living on incomes *(a)* below the 1979 bottom decile and *(b)* below 50 per cent. of 1979 average income, in 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988-89, 1990-91 and 1991-92, following tables 11.1 and

11.5 of the latest households below average income report; and what was the household income in current prices of these two cut off points for each of the years in question.

(4) what assessment he has made of the effect of a rise in the survey response rate from 70 per cent. to 85 per cent. on the low income data in the latest households below average income report; and what are the latest research results on the relationship between response to Government household income and expenditure surveys and income;

(5) what would have been the effect on the numbers of children in households living on incomes *(a)* below the 1979 bottom decile median and *(b)* below 50 per cent. of 1979 average income, by 1991-92, using the methodology of the latest households below average income report, if child benefit (i) had remained at its 1979 level in real terms and (ii) had been increased relative to household income;

(6) what was the equivalent monetary value in pound per week at April 1994 prices, following table A2 of the latest housing below average income report, in 1979, 1990-91 and 1991-92, before and after housing costs, of the decile means and medians of the two poorest decile groups and the richest decile group, and the total population mean of *(a)* a single adult, *(b)* a couple with no children, *(c)* a couple with one child aged three years, *(d)* a couple with one child aged 16 years, *(e)* a couple with two children aged three and eight years, *(f)* a couple with three children aged three, eight and 11 years and *(g)* a couple with three children aged 11, 16 and 17 years;

(7) what was the mean disposable income of each of the family types, as listed in the latest households below average income report, of the lowest decile group, second lowest decile group, and highest decile group in *(a)* current and *(b)* April 1994 prices, as ranked according to his Department's convention of equivalised income in 1979, 1988-89 and 1991-92.

Mr. Burt: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SESSION 1993–94

18th July—21st July 1994

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates and Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A36
Road works 417–8w

A46
Road works 417–8w

A259
Road works 72–3w

Abortion
603w
Northern Ireland 45w
Private health services 367–8w
Scotland 54–6w

Abortion Act 1967
Questions
367–8w

Access to countryside
458w

"Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies Consultation Paper"
310w

Access to Personal Files Act 1987
Questions
38w

Accident and emergency departments
Oldchurch Hospital (18.07.94) 151–8
Orsett Hospital (19.07.94) 287–8
Public petitions (19.07.94) 288
Sheffield (19.07.94) 288

Accidents
Inquiries 542–3w
Scotland 542–3w

Accountants
Inland Revenue 95w

Accounting
Welsh Development Agency 243w, 581–2w

Adjournment debates
Channel tunnel (21.07.94) 605–12

Advertising codes of practice
Football pools 102w

AEA Technology
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Aerospace industry
179w, 325w

Africa
Ministerial statements 130w
Rhinoceros 466–7w

Age addition
Scotland 623w

Agricultural and Food Research Council
Research councils 349–50w
Scientists 254w

Agricultural land
Staveley 503w

Agricultural marketing
Milk 184w

Agricultural production
Arable area payments scheme 354w
Wheat 352–4w

Agricultural research
Expenditure 351–2w
Manpower 351w

Agricultural subsidies
Scotland 123–4w

Agricultural workers
Northern Ireland 443w
Pay 543–4w, 583–4w
Scotland 543–4w
Wales 583–4w

Aids for handicapped
Railway stations 423w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Questions
Animal experiments, Disclosure of information 152w
Animal welfare 105–6w
Ainger, Mr Nick—continued
Arable area payments scheme, Agricultural production 354w
Arable area payments scheme, Wales 239–40w
Cereals, Wales 239w
Defence research establishments, Cold Meece 385w, 387w
Defence research establishments, Income 386w
Defence research establishments, Manpower 374w
Defence research establishments, Pendine 149w, 373–4w, 386–7w
Defence research establishments, Shoeburyness 388w
District health authorities, Labour costs 368w
Firing ranges, Shoeburyness 385–6w, 388w
Military bands, Educational qualifications 388w
Ministry of Defence Police, Pendine 387w
Nurses' training, Expenditure 240w
Nurses' training, Wales 240–1w
Project 2000, Expenditure 241–2w
Regional electricity companies, Non-fossil fuel obligation 333–4w
RNAD Trecwn 386w
Wheat, Agricultural production 352–4w

Ainsworth, Mr Peter
Questions
Gatwick Airport, Construction 69w
Greenbelt 463w
Greenbelt, Planning permission 463w
Greenbelt, Town and country planning 463w
Planning permission 464w
Planning permission, Public inquiries 464–5w
Planning permission, Redhill Aerodrome 465w
Town and country planning, Airports 466w

Air accidents
Military aircraft 557w

Air force
116w, 555w
Students 555w

Air freight transport
Cardiff Airport 245–6w
Transport of radioactive materials 74w

Air pollution
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 512–32
Disclosure of information 43–4w
EC action 457w
Greater London (20.07.94) 512–32
Stoke on Trent 456–7w
Urban areas 325w

Air pollution control
Carbon dioxide 44w
EC law 318w

Air pollution monitoring
456w
Urban areas 456–7w

Air transport
RAF Northolt 414w
Western Isles 58–9w

Airports
Flags 44w
South East region 69w, 414w
Town and country planning 466w

Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan, Minister of State for Defence Procurement until 20 July. Thereafter Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Security vetting 376–7w
Challenger tanks 376w
Defence contracts, Private sector 165–6
Defence contracts, Shipbuilding 384w
Defence industries, Diversification 159–60
Defence procurement, Navy 382w
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan—continued
Defence procurement, Type 23 frigates 171–2
Defence research, International cooperation 383w
Defence Research Agency, Performance standards 378w
Defence research establishments, Cold Meece 385w, 387w
Defence research establishments, Income 386w
Defence research establishments, Manpower 374w
Defence research establishments, Pendine 373–4w, 386–7w
Defence research establishments, Shoeburyness 388w
Firing ranges, Shoeburyness 385–6w, 388w
Hercules aircraft 114w
Hercules aircraft, Defence procurement 372w
McNally, Gordon 64w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 114w
Military bands, Educational qualifications 388w
Mines 114–5w
Mines, Arms trade 62w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 61w
Ministry of Defence, Recruitment 61w
Ministry of Defence Police, Pendine 387w
Nuclear weapons 171
Nuclear weapons tests 170–1
Procurement Executive, Offices 391w
Project Al Yamamah 384w
Radar, Defence contracts 379w
RAE Farnborough 393w
RAF Stanmore Park 166
RFA Sir Bedivere 384w
RFA Sir Bedivere, Defence procurement 115w
Small businesses, Ministry of Defence 376w
Torpedoes, Defence procurement 372w
Type 23 frigates, United Arab Emirates 64w

Alcoholic drinks duties
Beer (20.07.94) 342–4

Alcoholism
Armed forces 556–7w
Courts martial 558w

Algeria
Armed conflict 133w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Debates etc.
Church of England, Legal aid (19.07.94) 281–7
Questions
Church of England 25w
Church of England, Official residences 25w
Coal, Railway freight transport 523w
Horbury Convent, Property transfer 244w
Road traffic, Environment protection 7

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 385–7
Questions
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 104w
Rural Housing Trust 309w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Apprentices, Special training needs 225–6w
British citizenship, Children 159w, 176w
British citizenship, Naturalisation 159–60w
Centre for Information Discussion and Exchange on Crossing Etc 32w
Civil service 254w
Deportation 174–5w
EC immigration, Immigrants' dependants 35w
Entry clearances 160–1w

Allen, Mr Graham*—*continued
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 27–8w
Entry clearances, Immigrants' dependants 29w
Hong Kong, British national (overseas) 27w
Hong Kong, Citizenship of the British dependent territories 26–7w
Illegal immigrants 169w
Illegal immigrants, Immigrant detainees 165–6w
Immigrant detainees 169–72w, 270–4w
Immigrant detainees, Immigration rules 162w
Immigration appeals 163w, 408–13w
Immigration applications 169w
Immigration applications, Genetics 166–8w
Immigration applications, Hong Kong 170–3w
Immigration applications, Immigrants' dependants 35–8w, 161–4w, 274–5w
Immigration applications, India 167–8w
Immigration applications, Indian subcontinent 135–6w, 154–60w, 169w
Immigration applications, Medical examinations 161w, 170w
Immigration applications, Pakistan 161–2w
Immigration applications, Working holidays 270w
Immigration controls, Frontiers 237w
Indian subcontinent, Visas 28–9w
Overseas workers, Immigration rules 35w
Political refugees, Entry clearances 163–6w, 174w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 173–4w, 275–6w
Registration of births deaths and marriages, Marriage of convenience 113w, 302w
Special training needs, Training and enterprise councils 225w
Training, Young people 129w

Allergies
Biological weapons 563–4w

Alternative medicine
216w
Animal products 607w
Complaints 216w

Alton, Mr David
Questions
East Timor, Human rights 134w
Fire stations, Liverpool 490–1w
Mossley Hill Hospital, Homeopathy 216–7w
National Lottery Charities Board 269–70w
School administration 579w

Ambulance services
Emergency calls 599w
Exhaust emission controls 594w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government reform, Basildon (20.07.94) 358–9
Questions
Trade competitiveness 306

Ancram, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Agricultural workers, Northern Ireland 443w
Child care, Public expenditure 191–2w, 336–7w
Computer privacy, Personal injury compensation 189w
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 335w
Geriatric patients, Northern Ireland 343–4w
Government contracts, Northern Ireland Office 347w
Handicapped, Northern Ireland Office 336w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 444–6w
Mentally ill, Young people 444w

Ancram, Mr Michael*—*continued
NHS trusts, Management consultants 196w
Nurses' training, Northern Ireland 194w
Nurses' training, Teachers 193–4w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 443w
Wool, Republic of Ireland 196–7w

Andersen Consulting
Child Support Agency 197–8w, 256–7w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 170

Anderson, Ms Janet
Questions
Post Office Users' National Council 326w

Angola
UNITA 511w

Animal experiments
Cosmetics 497–8w
Disclosure of information 152w
Toxicology 497w

Animal Procedures Committee
154w

Animal products
Alternative medicine 607w
Customs 440w
Hong Kong 514w

Animal welfare
105–6w
EC countries 349w
Food labelling 144w

Animals
International trade 321–2w

Antarctic Treaty
(21.07.94) 586–94

Apprentices
Greater London 129w
Handicapped 403w
Special training needs 225–6w

Arable area payments scheme
Agricultural production 354w
Scotland 297–8w
Wales 239–40w

Architects Registration Council of the UK
108w

Architectural conservation
468w

Arctic fox
Farms 347w

Ards
Exservicemen 335w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
104w

Argyll and Bute
Driving offences 125w

Armed conflict
Algeria 133w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 113–4w
Burundi 25–6w
Rwanda 100–1w
Sudan 132w

Armed forces
166–7
Alcoholism 556–7w
Criminal proceedings 553–4w
Legal opinion 553w
NHS 593w
Official residences 62–4w, 559–62w
Redundancy 376w, 563w

Armed forces cadets
554w

Armed forces civilians
Northern Ireland 377w
Royal Naval Engineering College 558w
Security vetting 376–7w

Armed forces deployment
Bosnia-Herzegovina 165
Peace keeping operations 512w

Armed forces deployment*—*continued
Rwanda 168, 233w, 511w

Armed forces housing
Property transfer 555–6w

Armed forces medical services
Hospital closures 60w, 596w
Hospitals 596w

Armed forces recruitment
563w

Armed forces reserves
(20.07.94) 334–6

Armed forces training
60w
Military bands 375w, 389–90w
Otterburn 378w
Salisbury Plain 378w

Armed forces women
Navy 378w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
16

Arms trade
335–6w
Burundi 135w
Iraq 538w
Mines 62w
Saudi Arabia 393w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Single regeneration budget 105–7w
Urban areas, Expenditure 105–6w

Army strength
Territorial Army 167

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (20.07.94) 350–3
European Communities (Community Law) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 198
Latin America (20.07.94) 461–5, 470
Leader of the Opposition, Points of order (19.07.94) 287
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 201–3, 230
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 165
Lloyd's of London, Ministers 551–2w
Nazi war crimes, Prosecutions 15
Overseas aid 20

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Questions
Ministers' visits abroad, Belize 114w

Asbestos
Land pollution 457–8w

Asbestosis
British Rail Engineering 88w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
Rwanda, Overseas aid 173

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Witnesses, Majorca 495w

Assisted places scheme
Parental contributions (19.07.94) 262–79

Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales
214w

Asthma
Hospital admissions 363w
Medical equipment 363w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Air pollution, Greater London (20.07.94) 523–4, 526–31
Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 239–43, 257, 260–1
Pollution, Derbyshire (20.07.94) 538–41

Atkins, Mr Robert*—*continued
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 205–15, 231
Questions
Access to countryside 458w
Air pollution, Disclosure of information 43–4w
Air pollution, EC action 457w
Air pollution, Stoke on Trent 456–7w
Air pollution, Urban areas 325w
Air pollution control, EC law 318w
Air pollution monitoring 456w
Air pollution monitoring, Urban areas 456–7w
Animal welfare 105–6w
Animals, International trade 321–2w
Beaches, Water pollution 104w, 311–2w
Benzene 74w
Birds of prey, Theft 48–9w
Building regulations, Plumbing 113w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 44w
Coal mining, Environment protection 455w
Cycling, Children 302–3w
Elephants, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 316–8w
Elephants, Nature conservation 316w
Environment Agency 42w, 454–5w
Environment protection, Expenditure 38–9w
Environment protection, Solent 104w
Exhaust emission controls, EC law 107w
Exhaust emissions, Greater London 41w
Exhaust emissions, Pollution monitoring 324–5w
Hazardous wastes, Greater London 307w
Hedges and ditches, Nature conservation 470w
Land pollution, Asbestos 457–8w
Litter, Environment protection 320w
Local government functions, Waste disposal 110–1w
Nature conservation, Government grants 39–40w
Newsprint, Recycling 471w
Nitric acid, Imports 458–9w
Nitrous oxide, Construction materials 473w
Rhinoceros, Africa 466–7w
Rhinoceros, Nature conservation 466w
Sites of special scientific interest, Road construction 458w
"This Common Inheritance" 108w
Tipping of waste 458w
Trees, Preservation orders 450–2w
Waste disposal, Local government functions 310w
Water authorities, Government grants 104w
Water charges 43w, 103w, 311w, 462w
Water pollution, EC law 456w
Water resources, Worcestershire 467–8w
Water supply 468–9w
Water supply industry, Floods 315–6w
Wild geese, Pest control 467w
Zoos, Licensing 41–2w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Social security benefits rules 255w
Water charges 311w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 218–9
Questions
Contracts for services, Attorney General 31w
Contracts for services, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1w

Attorney General
Contracts for services 31w
Ministerial policy advisors 394w
Small businesses 445–7w

Audit
Self-regulating organisations 535–6w
Small businesses 537w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Debates etc.
Air pollution, Greater London (20.07.94) 515–21, 529
Questions
Tunnels, Woolwich 91w

Australia
Computer privacy 26w

Automated credit transfer
Child benefit 61–4w

Availability for work
Unemployment benefits 64–5w

Average earnings
441w
Financial institutions 430w

Bail (Amendment) Act 1993
Questions
153–4w

Baker, Mr Nicholas*, *Lord Commissioner of the Treasury until 20 July. Thereafter Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Questions
Immigrant detainees 489w
Members' correspondence 503w

Balance of trade
Manufactured goods 3w, 328w

Baldry, Mr Tony*, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment until 20 July. Thereafter Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 423–6
UN Conference on Population and Development (20.07.94) 548–52
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 233–4
Questions
Access to Personal Files Act 1987 38w
Angola, UNITA 511w
Bermuda, Official residences 514w
British embassies, Operating costs 515w
Building alterations, Planning permission 40w
Building industry 104–5w
Burundi, Political parties 511–2w
Cemeteries 105w
Coal mining, Planning permission 319–20w
Construction materials, Prices 41w
Councillors, Pay 107w
County Hall, Property transfer 307w
East Africa, Overseas aid 477w
East Africa, Refugees 476–7w
East Timor, Human rights 513w
Gosport Borough Council, Contracts for services 324w
Government assistance, North Tyneside 317–8w
Handicapped, Dept of the Environment 309–10w
Hong Kong, Animal products 514w
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 512–3w
Karibi-Whyte, Adolphus Godwin 478w
Landlord and tenant, Business premises 111–3w
Local government expenditure 315w
Local government reform 42–3w
Local government services, Contracts for services 108–10w
London Pensions Fund Authority 108w
Natural Resources Institute, Performance standards 477–8w
Nigeria, Foreign relations 511w
Open government, Disclosure of information 319w
Pakistan, Immigration applications 514–5w
Parish councils 315w
RMS St Helena 476w
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 511w
Rwanda, Departmental correspondence 474w
Rwanda, Ministers 511w

Baldry, Mr Tony*—*continued
Rwanda, Overseas aid 474–6w
Rwanda, Peace keeping operations 474w
Single regeneration budget 105–7w, 303–6w
Somalia, Overseas aid 475w
Somalia, Refugees 475–6w
UN Conference on Population and Development 473w
Urban areas, Expenditure 105–6w
Zaire, International assistance 474w
Zaire, Overseas aid 473–4w

Ballistic missile defence
Defence procurement 564w

Bangladesh
Entry clearances 289w
Immigration applications 235w
Immigration officers 235w
Temporary immigrants 235–6w

Bank of England
429w

Bankruptcy
Nadir, Asil 334w

Banks, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Minibuses, Road safety (21.07.94) 569
Questions
Council house sales, Leasehold housing 471w
West coast railway line 67w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 239, 256
Oral question time intervention (20.07.94) 308
Questions
Church of England 25w
House of Commons questions, Costs 91w
Manufactured exports 314
Nazi war crimes, Prosecutions 15–6
Road finance 12
St James' Park, Wild geese 449w
Tigers, Nature conservation 30w
Wild geese, Pest control 467w

Barges
Hall Sands 415w
South Hams 423w

Barking
Railway network 72w, 82–3w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (20.07.94) 484–5
Pollution, Derbyshire (20.07.94) 533–7, 541
VAT, Public petitions (21.07.94) 554
Questions
Abortion 603w
Agricultural land, Staveley 503w
Civil servants, Conflict of interests 557w
Council house sales, Northern Ireland 339w
Driving offences 152–4w
Driving offences, Northern Ireland 193w
Driving offences, Scotland 125w
Environment protection, Civil service agencies 341w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS trusts 364w
Income support, Derbyshire 622w
Northern Ireland Office, Deregulation initiative 341w
Parliamentary recess 174–5
Pedestrian crossings, Road accidents 118–20w
Post Office 326w
Post Office, Privatisation 309
Recycling, Northern Ireland 341–2w
Rents, Northern Ireland 193w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 194–5w
Road accidents, Pedestrians 84–5w
Sites of special scientific interest, Northern Ireland 341w
THORP 342w
Ulster Defence Association 551w
Water charges 43w

Barnes, Mr Harry—continued
Water supply disconnections, Northern Ireland 338w

Basildon
Local government reform (20.07.94) 358–9

Bates, Mr Michael, An Assistant Whip from 20 July
Debates etc.
Church of England, Legal aid (19.07.94) 283–5
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 255
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (20.07.94) 319–23
Sale of Teesside International Airport Etc Bill, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (20.07.94) 319–20
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 203
Questions
Compensation 407w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 517–8w
Export licensing 518w
Housing benefits, War pensions 624w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 174
Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority 202w
Regional development agencies, Foreign investment in UK 297–8
RFA Sir Bedivere, Defence procurement 115w
Sentencing, Appeals 35w
Subsidiarity 516w
Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Annual reports 516–7w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Questions
Trade competitiveness 311

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 23–5

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Questions
Air force 555w
Air force, Students 555w
Armed forces cadets 554w
Bridges, Repairs and maintenance 85w
British Rail, External financing limits 86w
British Rail, Public service obligation grant 86w
British Rail Engineering, Asbestosis 88w
Cars, Costs 87w
Child Support Agency, Interest payments 49w
Community care 14w
Doctors' list of patients 208w
EC nationals 290–1w
Family health services authorities, Expenditure 212–4w
GP fundholders, Finance 359–60w
Health services, Expenditure 593w
Hospital waiting lists 215w
Imphal Barracks 555w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 86w
NHS, Capital investment 210w
NHS, Theft 14w
NHS complaints 210w
Personal income, Yorkshire and Humberside 93w
Railway fares 421w
Railway network, Investment 86–7w, 420w
School leaving, Take-up of employment 65–6w
Tourism 3w, 24w

Beaches
Water pollution 104w, 311–2w

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Questions
VAT 172–3

Bedford
Listed buildings 42w

Beef
Import controls 176

Beer
Alcoholic drinks duties (20.07.94) 342–4

Beggs, Mr Roy
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Security vetting 376–7w
Geriatric patients, Northern Ireland 343–4w
Intimidation, Newtownabbey 441w
Ministry of Defence, Recruitment 61w
Regional development agencies 299
Veterinary Sciences Division, Civil service agencies 342w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 73–6
Questions
Day care of children, Palace of Westminster 7w
Dept of the Clerk of the House, Pay 450w
Military aircraft, Low flying 374w
Small businesses, House of Commons Commission 449w

Belfast
Industrial estates 189w
Local enterprise agencies 189–90w

Belfast action teams
Government grants 44w

Belize
Ministers' visits abroad 114w
Road construction 477w
Roads 516w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Sale of Teesside International Airport Etc Bill, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (20.07.94) 320–1
Questions
Foreign investment in UK 299

Bellamy's Club Room
Members' facilities 245w
Surveys 244–5w

Belling
Pension funds 628w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
EC Social Charter 326w

Bellwin scheme
Llandudno 238w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Debates etc.
Oldchurch Hospital, Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 152

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 46, 63–70

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 189
Questions
Income support, Stockport 621–2w
Motorways, Road tolls 4

Benzene
74w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Personal injury compensation, Court rules and procedures 406–7w

Bermuda
Official residences 514w

Berry, Mr Roger
Questions
Handicapped, Discrimination 263w

Betting and gaming duties
Football pools 93w

Betting shops
153w

Betts, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 31

Bilateral aid
Family planning 99w

Billing
312–3
Dept of Trade and Industry 312
Government departments 313, 534w

Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
563w

Biological weapons
Allergies 563–4w

Birds of prey
Theft 48–9w

Blakenhurst Prison
178w

Bleiloch Inquiry
see Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry

Blind
Concessionary television licences 24w
Disability living allowance 610w

Blood donors
605w

Blood sports
Public petitions (21.07.94) 554

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Armed forces medical services, Hospital closures 596w
Armed forces medical services, Hospitals 596w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 209w, 358w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia, Medical research 209w
Dental charges 367w
Dental services 594w
Dental services, Health hazards 213w
Environmental health officers 361w
Medical research 207–8w
NHS, Armed forces 593w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boateng, Mr Paul
Questions
Divorce law 2w
Health services, Elderly 219w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Finance 1–2w
Sheppard, John, Brent Borough Council 219w
Sheppard, John, Death 20w

Body, Sir Richard
Questions
Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Finance 597w

Bombings
Lockerbie 97w

Booth, Mr Hartley
Questions
Corporation tax, Water companies 92w
Foreign investment in UK, Car industry 305–6
Water authorities, Government grants 104w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Armed conflict 113–4w
Armed forces deployment 165

Boswell, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Debates etc.
Schools, Sutton Coldfield (21.07.94) 559–63

Boswell, Mr Tim—continued
Questions
Construction, Student numbers 575–6w
Further education, Age participation rates 573w
Postgraduate students, Nuclear physics 137–8w
School leaving 140–1w
Secondary education, Curriculum 574w
Student grants 300w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Newspaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 41[illegible], 448
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 372, 377, 380–2
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 135, 138–41
Questions
Average earnings 441w
Civil service pensions 92w
London Transport, Public appointments 82w
Pensions, National insurance contributions 265w
Road traffic, Greater London 9
Treasury, Civil service pensions 92w

Bouncers
494w

Bovine immunodeficiency virus
144w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
Disease control 348w
Research 142w

Bowis, Mr John, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Brent Borough Council, Local government social services 361–2w
Child care, Public expenditure 208w, 214w
Child minding 209w
Child minding, Corporal punishment 215w
Children in care, Codes of practice 608w
Community care 14w, 215w
Day care of children 209w
Doctors' list of patients 368–70w
Doctors' list of patients, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 360–1w
Family doctors, Manpower 369w
Health services 219w
Health services, Elderly 219w
Hospital consultants, Greater London 365w
Mental Health Act 1983 19w
Mental patients, Per capita costs 362w
Mentally ill, Home care services 604w
Psychology, Manpower 220w
Sheppard, John, Brent Borough Council 219w
Sheppard, John, Death 20w
Wheelchairs 602w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Questions
Child minding 209w
Infant mortality 358–9w
Lloyd's of London, Debts 329w
Policewomen 34w
Prisoners, HIV infection 498w

Bradford Community Health NHS Trust
Public appointments 601–2w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Child Support Agency, Performance standards 615w
Housing benefits 51–2w, 206–7w
Industrial diseases benefits, Bronchitis 50w
Industrial injuries scheme, Social security benefits rules 620w
Maintenance, Children 616w
Reduced earnings allowance 618w
Social security benefits 620w
Social security benefits rules, Voluntary work 49w

Bradley, Mr Keith—continued
Social security recipients, Training 49w
Social security reform 619w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Questions
Environment Agency 323w
Waste disposal, Incinerators 323–4w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 89–91

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 65–6, 100–3
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 31
Questions
Efficiency scrutinies 507–8w

Breast cancer
16–7w, (20.07.94) 340–2

Breast feeding
605w
Working mothers 65w

Brent Borough Council
Local government social services 361–2w
Sheppard, John 219w

Brewing industry
326w

Bridges
Railway network 85w
Repairs and maintenance 85w
River Severn 450w
Worcester City Council 450w

British Airports Authority
London airports 530w

British citizenship
Children 159w, 176w
Naturalisation 159–60w

British Coal Corporation
Consultants 522w
Pension funds 536–7w
Privatisation 332w, 522–3w, 536–7w

British Coal Enterprise
523w

British embassies
Operating costs 515w

British Iron and Steel Producers Association
301

British Library
Kennedy and Donkin 102w

British national (overseas)
Hong Kong 27w

British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association
564–5w

British Paralympic Association
448w

British Rail
External financing limits 86w
Privatisation 67w, 415–6w
Public service obligation grant 86w

British Rail Engineering
Asbestosis 88w

British residents abroad
Handicap benefits 619–20w

Broadcasting Council for Wales
Codes of practice 447w

Bronchitis
Industrial diseases benefits 50w, 625–6w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for National Heritage until 20 July
Questions
British Library, Kennedy and Donkin 102w
Concessionary television licences, Blind 24w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for National Heritage until 20 July—continued
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 101–2w
Film industry 24w
Football pools, Advertising codes of practice 102w
Mass media, Ownership 24w
National lottery, Camelot Group 101w
Television engineering, Performance standards 184–5w

Broomfield Hospital
Burns 19–20w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 39, 44, 49–61

Brown, Mr Michael
Questions
Gas supply industry 334w
Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency, Performance standards 195w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
House of Commons reform (20.07.94) 360–2
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 389–90
Questions
Defence procurement 163
RFA Sir Bedivere, Defence procurement 115w

Browning, Mrs Angela, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food from 20 July
Questions
Landlord and tenant, Business premises 111–3w
Road signs 68w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Questions
Naval bases, Portland 391–2w
Naval Support Command, Manpower 391–2w
Procurement Executive, Offices 391w
RNAS Culdrose, Helicopters 392–3w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Post Office, Privatisation (20.07.94) 317
Questions
Cellular phones 334w
Electricity tariffs 302

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 40, 53, 87–9
European Commission (18.07.94) 35–6
Questions
European Commission 174

Building alterations
Planning permission 40w
VAT exemptions 426–7w

Building industry
104–5w, 466w
PAYE 95–6w
Unemployment 127w

Building regulations
Plumbing 113w

Burden, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 215–8
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Research 142w
Burundi, Political parties 511–2w
Israel, Occupied territories 232–3w
Single regeneration budget 461w

Burma
Political prisoners (21.07.94) 628–34

Burnley Health Care NHS Trust
Out-patient clinics 599w

Burns
Broomfield Hospital 19–20w
St Andrew's Hospital Billericay 19–20w

Burns, Mr Simon, An Assistant Whip from 20 July
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 113–4w
Capital allowances, Shipping 267–8w
Central Statistical Office, Performance standards 267w
Civil service retirement, Costs 95w
Company cars 425–6w
Dept of the Environment, MINIS 42w
EC Finance Council 94w
Economic situation 172
Government securities 428w
Private Finance Panel, Government grants 426w
St Andrew's Hospital Billericay, Burns 19–20w
Taxation, Departmental publications 428w
Valuation Office 427–8w
VAT, Tax collection 427w
VAT exemptions, Building alterations 426–7w
VAT exemptions, English education 267w

Burt, Mr Alistair, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (20.07.94) 481–91
Questions
Child benefit 633–4w
Child benefit, Automated credit transfer 61–4w
Child Support Agency 50w
Child Support Agency, Andersen Consulting 197–8w, 256–7w
Child Support Agency, Interest payments 49w
Child Support Agency, Performance standards 615w
Child Support Agency, Publications 49–50w
Child support officers 617–8w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 205w
Disposable income 634w
Family credit 200–1w, 255w
Family income 632–4w
Habitual residence test 205–6w
Habitual residence test, Social security benefits rules 620w
Housing benefits 261–2w
Income support, Derbyshire 622w
Income support, Homelessness 201w
Income support, Scotland 622–3w
Income support, Stockport 621–2w
Income support, Young people 627–8w
Jobseeker's allowance 53w
Lone parent families, Standard of living 257–8w
Maintenance, Children 615–8w
Personal income 612–4w, 632–4w
Personal income, Surveys 633–4w
Poverty, Children 260w
RESTART programme 631–2w
Severe hardship provision 260w
Social Security Agency district offices 626–8w
Social security appeals 627w
Social security benefits 198–200w
Social security benefits, Administrative costs 614–6w
Social security benefits, Political refugees 53–4w
Social security benefits rules 255w
Social security benefits rules, Crime victims 618w
Social security recipients, Poverty trap 199–200w
Water charges, Refuges 205w

Burundi
Armed conflict 25–6w
Arms trade 135w
Political parties 511–2w

Bus fares
Price increases 417w

Bus services
Competition 70w

Business
EC law 531w
Profits 437w

Business motions
(20.07.94) 323

Business premises
Landlord and tenant 111–3w

Business start-up scheme
404–5w

Butcher, Mr John
Questions
Deer, Veterinary drugs 141–2w
Motorways, Road safety 247w, 418w
Trade competitiveness 307
Wild animals 142w

Butler, Mr Peter
Questions
Road tax, Tax evasion 252–3w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 52, 71–2, 111, 115, 117–8
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 127w

Buy outs
Coal products 523–4w

Byers, Mr Stephen
Questions
Armed forces, Official residences 62–4w, 559–62w
Bermuda, Official residences 514w
British embassies, Operating costs 515w
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 137w
Fire regulations, Working conditions 277w
Firearms certificates 284–5w
Free school meals 301w
Free school meals, Scotland 296w
Free school meals, Wales 241–2w
Funding Agency for Schools 575w
Government contracts, Northern Ireland Office 347w
Grant maintained schools, Disclosure of information 568w
Grant maintained schools, Finance 572w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 567w
Grants for education support and training 578w
Identity cards, Elderly 205w
Legal Aid Fund 224w
Local government expenditure 315w
Nadir, Asil, Bankruptcy 334w
Primary education, Class sizes 136w
School closures, Administrative delays 137w
School population 300–1w, 568–72w
Severe hardship provision 260w
Special education, Conferences 137w

Bypasses
7

Cable systems
23w, 531w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
Trade competitiveness 306–7

CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments
Contracts for services 586w

Camelot Group
National lottery 101w

Cameras
Speed limits 484w

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Nuclear non proliferation 381–2w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 103–5
Hinchingbrooke Hospital, Maternity services (20.07.94) 394–405
Questions
Armed forces, Criminal proceedings 553–4w
Armed forces, Legal opinion 553w
Courts martial 381w, 553–4w
Regional selective assistance 313

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Questions
Defence procurement, Hercules aircraft 162
Dunk, Reginald 135–6w
Type 23 frigates, United Arab Emirates 64w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 28
Questions
Desert storm syndrome 160–1

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (19.07.94) 192–4, (20.07.94) 374–80
Questions
McNally, Gordon 3w, 64w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 5
National vocational qualifications 227–8w
Vocational education, Further education colleges 228w
West Cumbria Development Agency, Industrial development 304

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
VAT 176

Cancer
Dounreay 121–2w
Health services 18–9w
Scotland 56w, 291w
Skin disorders 15w, 56w
Wales 146–7w, 237–8w

Cannabis
566w

Canterbury City Council
466w

Capital
Companies 438–9w

Capital allowances
Shipping 267–8w

Capital gains tax
435–6w

Car boot sales
(19.07.94) 194

Car industry
Foreign investment in UK 305–6

Carbon dioxide
Air pollution control 44w

Cardiff Airport
Air freight transport 245–6w

Cardiff Bay barrage
Fish conservation 244w

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
Government grants 585–6w
Land ownership and tenure 585w

Care of Cathedrals (Supplementary Provisions) Measure 1994
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Carers
Scotland 296w

"Caring for the Future"
Costs 148w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Floods, Llandudno 238w
Gwynedd, Rheumatology 238w
Housing, Wales 238w
Student accommodation, Wales 239w
University of Wales, Student numbers 240w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Questions
East Africa, Overseas aid 8w

Cars
Costs 87w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Control of Car Boot Sales Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 194
European Communities (21.07.94) 597–601
European Communities (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 198
Questions
Comfrey 348–9w
Waste disposal, Local government functions 310w

Cellular phones
334w

Cemeteries
105w
Scotland 118w

Central London
Handicapped drivers 414–5w

Central Statistical Office
Performance standards 267w

Central Veterinary Laboratory
Annual reports 504w

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research
601w

Centre for Information Discussion and Exchange on Crossing Etc
32w

Centre for Policy Studies
31w

Cereals
Wales 239w

Challenger tanks
376w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Ministerial policy advisors 253w
Small businesses 506w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Five
Radio frequencies 447–8w

Channel tunnel
Adjournment debates (21.07.94) 605–12
European Passenger Services 250w
Railway network 72w, 82–3w, (20.07.94) 350–3, 414w, (21.07.94) 605–12

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Questions
European Council 97–8w
Public Safety Zone Policy Review 413–4w

Charities Board
see National Lottery Charities Board

Charrington, Brian
31w

Chartermark scheme
Public bodies 297w
Scotland 297w

Chichester, Giles
512w

Chidgey, Mr David
Questions
Child support officers 617–8w

Child benefit
633–4w
Automated credit transfer 61–4w

Child care
Northern Ireland 191–2w, 336–7w
Public expenditure 117–8w, 146w, 191–2w, 208w, 214w, 292w, 336–7w
Scotland 117–8w, 292w
Wales 146w

Child minding
209w
Corporal punishment 215w

Child Support Agency
50w
Andersen Consulting 197–8w, 256–7w
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 471–91
Interest payments 49w
Performance standards 615w
Publications 49–50w

Child support officers
617–8w

Children
British citizenship 159w, 176w
Cycling 141w, 302–3w
Homicide 269w
Human rights 10w
Maintenance 615–8w
Nutrition and health 142–3w
Overseas aid 225w
Poverty 260w
Scotland 59w
Tuberculosis 370–1w

Children in care
Codes of practice 608w

Children's hospitals
Northern General Hospital Sheffield (19.07.94) 288

China
Nuclear weapons tests 131–2w
Trade promotion 327–8w

Chinook helicopters
381w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Breast cancer (20.07.94) 341
Questions
Trade competitiveness 310

Christmas Island
Nuclear weapons tests 115–6w

Church, Ms Judith
Debates etc.
Oldchurch Hospital, Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 154

Church of England
25w
Legal aid (19.07.94) 281–7
Official residences 25w

Church of England (Legal Aid) Measure 1994
Debates etc.
(19.07.94) 281–7
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Citizenship of the British dependent territories
Hong Kong 26–7w

Civil rights
Handicapped (19.07.94) 194, (20.07.94) 318

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
(20.07.94) 326–9

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (19.07.94) 194

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Scotland) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (20.07.94) 318

Civil servants
Complaints 508–9w
Conflict of interests 557w
Dept of Health 20w, 601w, 607w
Dept of the Environment 465–6w
Performance appraisal 68–70w, 83–4w

Civil service
254w

Civil service agencies
Annual reports 258w
Environment protection 241w
Northern Ireland Dept of the Environment 443–4w
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland 195w
Veterinary Sciences Division 342w
Watercourse Management Division 342w

Civil service manpower
Coastguard Agency 76w
Dept of Transport 87–8w
Disability working allowance 611w
HM Coastguard 76w
Information Technology Services Agency 257w
Marine Safety Agency 75w
Surveyor Generals Organisation 75w

Civil service pensions
92w
Treasury 92w

Civil service recruitment
Convictions 61w

Civil service retirement
Costs 95w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Questions
Hercules aircraft 114w
Trade competitiveness 311, 328w

Clappison, Mr James
Questions
Partnership for peace 116w
"Streamlining Planning" Consultation Paper" 319w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Armed forces training, Otterburn 378w
Defence industries, Diversification 160
Defence procurement, Type 23 frigates 171–2
Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry 64w

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 189

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 38–49, 51, 56, 58–9
Questions
Average earnings 441w
Capital allowances, Shipping 267–8w
Capital gains tax 435–6w
Cardiff Airport, Air freight transport 245–6w
Central Statistical Office, Performance standards 267w
Company cars 425–6w
Customs, Animal products 440w
Debts, Developing countries 263–5w
EC external trade 266w
EC Finance Council 94w
EC grants and loans 433–4w
Exchange rates, Inflation 266w
Government securities 428w
Inland Revenue, Liverpool 437w
Investment trusts 435w
Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, Tax allowances 438w
Ministerial policy advisors, Treasury 268w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
Ministers' visits abroad, Treasury 434w
Money supply 266–7w
Pensions, National insurance contributions 265w
Private Finance Panel, Government grants 426w
Tax collection, Dewsbury 265w
Tax yields 264w
Taxation, Departmental publications 428w
Taxation, Royal family 268w
Trade competitiveness 433w
UK trade with EC 430w
Valuation Office 427–8w
VAT, Tax collection 427w
VAT exemptions, Building alterations 426–7w
VAT exemptions, English education 267w
VAT tribunals 430w
Water charges, Consumer expenditure 265–6w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 5w, 263–5w
Export credit guarantees, Jordan 22w
M8, Road works 544–5w
Military aid to civil community 563w
Mines 563w
Mines, Arms trade 62w
Non-governmental organisations, Finance 17

Class sizes
Primary education 136w

Classic FM
(20.07.94) 334–6

Clerk's Dept
see Dept of the Clerk of the House

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 247–52
Questions
Royal yacht 169

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 380
Questions
East Timor, Human rights 18
Unemployment, Germany 67w

Coal
Railway freight transport 523w

Coal Authority
523w
Public appointments 333w

Coal Industry Act 1994
Questions
22w, 455w

Coal mine closures
Government assistance 185–8w

Coal mining
Environment protection 455w
Planning permission 319–20w, 469–70w
Privatisation 329w
Subsidence 528–9w

Coal products
Buy outs 523–4w
Privatisation 523w

Coal stocks
332w

Coastguard Agency
Civil service manpower 76w
Operating costs 419w
Performance standards 74w, 251w

"Code of Accountability"
1–2w

"Code of Conduct Code of Accountability"
212w

Coe, Mr Sebastian
Questions
Water supply 468–9w

Coffee
Prices 440–1w

Coffey, Ms Ann
Questions
Children in care, Codes of practice 608w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Questions
A36, Road works 417–8w
Access to Personal Files Act 1987 38w
Age addition, Scotland 623w
Australia, Computer privacy 26w
Computer privacy, Criminal records 176w, 487–9w
Computer privacy, National insurance 547–8w
Computer privacy, Personal injury compensation 189w
Fire services, Greater London 485w
Hong Kong, Criminal investigation 229–31w
Identity cards 492w
James, Gerald, Criminal investigation 554w
Malaysia 30w
Malaysia, Foreign relations 132w
Medical records 209w
Medical records, Computer privacy 209–10w
National insurance, Computer privacy 50w
Road construction, Cost benefit analysis 73w
Scottish Office, Disclosure of information 623w
Taxation, Royal family 268w
Twyford Down, Private detectives 73w

Cold Meece
Defence research establishments 385w, 387w

Colombia
Human rights 515w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Financial services 4w
Financial services, Fees and charges 5w
Investor protection 4w
Personal Investment Authority 3–4w
Trees, Preservation orders 450–2w

Comfrey
348–9w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Commonwealth of Independent States
Visas 29w

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Finance 377w

Community action
402w

Community care
14w, 215w
Housing 462w

Community health services
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust 585w

Companies
Capital 438–9w

Companies political contributions
Conservative Party 8w

Companies Registration Office (England and Wales)
181w

Company cars
425–6w

Company liquidations
Ferranti 180w

Compensation Recovery Unit
201w, 608w

Competition
Bus services 70w
Gas supply industry 21–2w

"Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win White Paper"
306
Trades' union Congress 310

Compliance cost assessments
184w

Compulsory purchase
Road construction (20.07.94) 324–6

Computer privacy
Australia 26w
Criminal records 176w, 487–9w
Medical records 209–10w
National insurance 50w, 547–8w
Northern Ireland 189w
Personal injury compensation 189w
Scotland 547–8w

Computers in National Health Service
243w, 594w

Concessionary television licences
174
Blind 24w
Pensioners 101–2w

Confederation of British Industry
329w

Confederation of British Industry Wales
584w

Conflict of interests
Civil servants 557w
Forestry Enterprise 58w
Scottish Natural Heritage 58w

Congdon, Mr David
Questions
International Labour Organisation, Treaties 228w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Questions
Mines 114–5w

Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(19.07.94) 239–61

Conservative Party
Companies political contributions 8w
Dept of Social Security 619w
Fund raising 416–7w, 434w, 448–9w, 468w, 496w, 565w, 579w, 603w

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (18.07.94) 127
2R* and rem stages* (20.07.94) 368
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Consolidated Fund debates
Air pollution (20.07.94) 512–32
Child Support Agency (20.07.94) 471–91
Cyprus (20.07.94) 407–26
Forestry (20.07.94) 492–512
Forestry Commission (20.07.94) 492–512
Hinchingbrooke Hospital (20.07.94) 394–406
Iraq (20.07.94) 542–4
Latin America (20.07.94) 453–70
Newspaper press (20.07.94) 427–52
Pollution (20.07.94) 533–41

Construction materials
Nitrous oxide 473w
Prices 41w

Consultants
601w
British Coal Corporation 522w
Public bodies 547w
Scotland 547w

Consumer durables
Labelling 21w

Consumer expenditure
Water charges 265–6w

Contracts for services
Attorney General 31w
CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments 586w
Dept of Trade and Industry 535w
Dept of Transport 84w
Gosport Borough Council 324w
Local government services 108–10w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 1w
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 64w
Scottish Prison Service 293w

Contracts of employment
Health service staff 365–6w

Control of Car Boot Sales Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (19.07.94) 194

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
Elephants 316–8w

Convictions
Civil service recruitment 61w

Cook, David
Public appointments 192w

Cook, Fionnula
Public appointments 192w

Cook, Mr Frank
Questions
Defence land, Radioactive wastes 556w

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Newspaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 435, 442–5, 448
Questions
Electricity supply industry 302
Postal services, EC action 539w
Trade competitiveness 308

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 52
Forestry (19.07.94) 188
Questions
Special education, Appeals 137w
Territorial Army, Army strength 167

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Council house sales, Leasehold housing 471w
Road safety barriers 71w
World War II, Festivals and special occasions 101w

Coopers and Lybrand
Foster, Christopher 249w
Railtrack 249w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John,
Paymaster-General until 20 July
Questions
Betting and gaming duties, Football pools 93w
EC budget 6w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Motorways, Road safety 418w
Newsprint, Recycling 471w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Antarctic Treaty (21.07.94) 586–90, 592–4
Latin America (20.07.94) 456–61, 464, 466, 468
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 373
Questions
Colombia, Human rights 515w
East Timor, Human rights 513w
Family health services authorities, Appeals 17–8w
Geneva conventions 493w
Immigrant detainees 489–90w
Political refugees, Young people 494w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 475–6w
Turkey, Human rights 515–6w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 179

Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust
Legal costs 360w

Coroners
Judicial review 495w

Corporal punishment
Child minding 215w

Corporation tax
Departmental forms 433w
Water companies 92w

Corston, Ms Jean
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 371–2
Questions
Child benefit 633–4w
Disposable income 634w
Family income 632–4w
Nutrition and health 142w, 144–6w
Nutrition and health, Children 142–3w
Nutrition and health, Family income 371w
Personal income 632–4w
Personal income, Surveys 633–4w
Post Office Counters 326w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 497–8w

Council house sales
Leasehold housing 471w
Northern Ireland 339w

Council housing
Right to buy 459–60w

Council tax
313–4w
Disclosure of information 117w
Scotland 117w, 545–6w
Tax collection 314w
Valuation 242w, 313–4w, 462–3w
Wales 242w

Council tax capping
107w

Councillors
Pay 107w

County Hall
Property transfer 306–7w

Court rules and procedures
Personal injury compensation 406–7w

Courts martial
381w, 553–4w
Alcoholism 558w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Aerospace industry 179w
Ballistic missile defence, Defence procurement 564w
Biological weapons, Allergies 563–4w
Child benefit, Automated credit transfer 61–4w
Compensation 223w
Defence contracts, Prices 564w
Defence research, International cooperation 383w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Information services 331w
Design Council 329w
Design Council, Finance 329–30w
Export credit guarantees 330w
Export credit guarantees, Costs 330–1w
Export credit guarantees, Iraq 521–2w
Export credit guarantees, Jordan 330w
HIV infection 362w
Information Technology Services Agency, Civil service manpower 257w
Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, Tax allowances 438w
Post Office, Privatisation 309–10
Post Office, Profits 327w
Post offices, Social security payments 327w
Project Al Yamamah 384w

Cousins, Mr Jim—continued
RFA Sir Bedivere, Defence procurement 115w
Social security benefits, Administrative costs 614–6w
Social security payments 620–1w
STEP programme 178–9w
Taiwan, Visas 234w
Tax yields 264w
War pensions, Northern region 621w
Water charges, Consumer expenditure 265–6w

Coventry
Defective housing 460w
Floods 315–6w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 336–8, 411–5
Questions
Airports, South East region 414w
Apprentices, Greater London 129w
Armed forces women, Navy 378w
Defence land, Property transfer 555–6w
Deportation 276w
Fisheries 141w
Hazardous wastes, Greater London 307w
Homicide, Children 269w
Hong Kong, Detention centres 231w
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 231w, 512–3w
Immigrant detainees 175w
Land pollution, Asbestos 457–8w
Lorries, Greater London 415w
Nadir, Asil, Extradition 132w
NHS complaints 210w
Older workers, Unemployment 65w
Organised crime, Greater London 32w
Overseas aid, Children 225w
Prison accommodation 175–6w
Prison administration 176w
Prison population 478–82w
Prison Service Agency, Publications 32–3w
Remand in custody 175w
RFA Sir Bedivere 384w
Slaughterhouses 143w
Unemployment, Greater London 226w
Vietnamese refugees 130–1w
Vietnamese refugees, Repatriation 130w

Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia
209w, 358w
Medical research 209w

Crime prevention
Motor vehicle theft 496w

Crime victims
Health services 219w
NHS charges exemptions 607–8w
Sickness benefits 618w
Social security benefits rules 618–9w
Unemployment benefits 618w
Widows' benefits 618–9w

Crimes of violence
Dept of Transport 77w

Criminal injuries compensation scheme
149–52w, 205w, 496–7w

Criminal investigation
Hong Kong 229–31w
James, Gerald 554w
Malaysia 229–30w

Criminal proceedings
Armed forces 553–4w

Criminal records
Computer privacy 176w, 487–9w

Critchley, Mr Julian
Questions
Armed forces medical services, Hospital closures 60w
RAE Farnborough 393w

Croydon Tramlink Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Cummings, Mr John
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (20.07.94) 303
Questions
Gas Consumers Council, Gas safety 302–3

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Questions
Children, Human rights 10w
Defective housing, Coventry 460w
GP fundholders 219w
Health education, Inter agency cooperation 218w
Health services 218–9w
NHS trusts 218w
Overseas aid 11w
Overseas aid, Defence expenditure 11w
Public sector housing 312w
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 227w
Tenant harassment, Private rented housing 312w
Unemployment 226w
UNICEF, UK contributions 10w
Water supply industry, Floods 315–6w

Curriculum
Secondary education 574w

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Government (21.07.94) 616–9
Questions
Architectural conservation 468w
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 104w
Bridges, Worcester City Council 450w
Building industry 466w
Canterbury City Council 466w
Civil servants, Dept of the Environment 465–6w
Coal mining, Planning permission 469–70w
Council house sales, Leasehold housing 471w
Council tax 313–4w
Council tax, Tax collection 314w
Council tax, Valuation 313–4w, 462–3w
Council tax capping 107w
County Hall, Property transfer 306–7w
Defective housing, Coventry 460w
Docklands light railway 471–3w
First time buyers 464w
Government grants to local authorities 107w
Greenbelt 463w
Greenbelt, Planning permission 463w
Greenbelt, Town and country planning 463w
House renovation grants 465w
Housing, Community care 462w
Housing action trusts, Kingston upon Hull 468w
Housing association grant 459w
Housing Corporation, Housing construction 460w
Listed buildings, Bedford 42w
Local authorities 463w
Local government elections, Local government reform 309w
Local government finance 107w
Local government reform, West Sussex 307–8w
Markets, Local authority powers 467w
Non-domestic rates, Local government revenue 455w
Non-domestic rates, Non-payment 455w
Peat, Extractive industries 469w
Planning permission 464w
Planning permission, Public inquiries 464–5w
Planning permission, Redhill Aerodrome 465w
Property Services Agency, Shares 469w
Public sector housing 459–60w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 460w
Rents 472w
Rural planning, Horses 318–9w
Single regeneration budget 460–2w

Curry, Mr David—continued
Single regeneration budget, Index of urban deprivation 461w
Slum clearance 459w
Small businesses, Dept of the Environment 452–4w
"Streamlining Planning Consultation Paper" 319w
Town and country planning, Airports 466w
Urban areas, Expenditure 461–2w
Westminster City Council 467w

Customs
Animal products 440w

Cycling
71w
Children 141w, 302–3w

Cyprus
(20.07.94) 336–8
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 407–26
Exports 513–4w

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Debates etc.
Road traffic, Transport policy (20.07.94) 353–5
Questions
Council tax, Valuation 242w
Lorry drivers, Prisoners 234w
Water charges, Refuges 205w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves, Classic FM (20.07.94) 335
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 241
EC presidency (19.07.94) 192, (20.07.94) 317
Economic situation (18.07.94) 43
Fertility, Research (20.07.94) 357–8
Forestry (19.07.94) 183
Iraq (20.07.94) 544–5
Local government reform, Hereford and Worcester (20.07.94) 330–1
Newspaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 427, 429–30, 436, 439, 446, 448–9
Questions
Architectural conservation 468w
Cancer, Scotland 291w
Cancer, Skin disorders 15w, 56w
Cemeteries 105w
Cemeteries, Scotland 118w
Export credit guarantees, South America 331w
Lockerbie, Bombings 97w
Marsh Arabs, Oppression 372w
Nitrous oxide, Construction materials 473w
Overseas trade, South America 331w
Scottish Prison Service, Contracts for services 293w
Trade competitiveness 307
UK companies abroad, South America 529w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Gulf Trust 380–1w
Telecommunications industry, EC internal trade 328–9w

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
EC Committee of the Regions 29w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 148–50w
Welsh Economic Council 8w
Welsh Office, Non-departmental public bodies 583w

Davis, Mr David, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service and Science until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Antarctic Treaty (21.07.94) 591–4
European Communities (21.07.94) 602–4

Davis, Mr David—continued
Questions
Identity cards 289w

Day, Mr Stephen
Questions
Air pollution control, EC law 318w
Speed limits 249w
Speed limits, Cameras 484w

Day care of children
209w
Palace of Westminster 7w

Deal Barracks
Military bands 375–6w, 389–90w
Relocation of employees 389w

Death
596w
Driving offences (21.07.94) 553
Road accidents 492–3w
Sheppard, John 20w

Debts
Developing countries 5w, 96–7w, 263–5w
Kashmir 96–7w
Lloyd's of London 329w

Deer
Veterinary drugs 141–2w

Defective housing
Coventry 460w

Defence Analytical Services Agency
Performance standards 379w

Defence contracts
61w, 162
Mergers 562–3w
Prices 564w
Private sector 165–6
Radar 379w
Royal Air Force 165–6
Shipbuilding 384w

Defence expenditure
374w, 383w
NATO 382–3w
Overseas aid 11w

Defence industries
Diversification 159–60
Scotland 167

Defence land
Property transfer 555–6w
Radioactive wastes 556w

Defence procurement
163, 167
Ballistic missile defence 564w
European fighter aircraft 163
Hercules aircraft 162, 372w
Military aircraft 114w
Navy 171, 382w
RFA Sir Bedivere 115w
Torpedoes 372w
Type 23 frigates 171–2

Defence research
International cooperation 383w

Defence Research Agency
Performance standards 378w

Defence research establishments
Cold Meece 385w, 387w
Income 386–9w
Manpower 374w
Pendine 149w, 373–4w, 386–7w
Shoeburyness 388w

Dell
Reexports 519w

Democracy
Haiti 131w
Nigeria 478w

Denham, Mr John
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 32
Personal pensions, Investor protection (20.07.94) 348–50
Questions
Road traffic, Exhaust emissions 10–1

Dental charges
367w

Dental services
12–4w, 594w
Deptford 601w
Health hazards 213w

Dentists
Patients 607w
Wales 243w, 583w

Departmental correspondence
Rwanda 474w

Departmental forms
Corporation tax 433w

Departmental publications
Home Office 34w
Taxation 428w

Deportation
174–5w, 276w
Scotland 276w

Deprivation indicators
358w
Family health services authorities 355–8w

Dept for Education
Ministerial policy advisors 299–300w
Ministers' visits abroad 579w
Small businesses 139–40w

Dept of Employment
Expenditure 67w
Handicapped 128w
Ministerial policy advisors 227w

Dept of Health
Civil servants 20w, 601w, 607w
Information services 364w
Ministerial policy advisors 362–3w
Ministers' visits abroad 603w
Small businesses 210–1w

Dept of National Heritage
Handicapped 103w
Ministerial policy advisors 246–7w
Ministers' visits abroad 448–9w
Small businesses 102–3w

Dept of Social Security
Conservative Party 619w
Ministerial policy advisors 259–60w
Small businesses 255–6w

Dept of the Clerk of the House
Pay 450w

Dept of the Environment
Civil servants 465–6w
Handicapped 309–10w
MINIS 42w
Ministerial policy advisors 313w
Ministers' visits abroad 468w
Small businesses 452–4w

Dept of Trade and Industry
Billing 312
Contracts for services 535w
Handicapped 21w
Information services 331w
Information technology 535w
Ministerial policy advisors 538w
Small businesses 519–21w, 539–40w

Dept of Transport
Civil service manpower 87–8w
Contracts for services 84w
Crimes of violence 77w
Disciplinary proceedings 77w
Efficiency scrutinies 85w, 87w
Handicapped 96w, 247–8w
Ministers' visits abroad 416–7w
Operating costs 87–8w
Pay 75–6w
Performance appraisal 68–70w, 83–4w
Sick leave 78w
Small businesses 88–9w

Deptford
Dental services 601w

Derbyshire
Income support 622w
Pollution (20.07.94) 533–41

Deregulation
Small businesses (20.07.94) 346–8

Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
(20.07.94) 346–8

Deregulation initiative
Northern Ireland 341w
Northern Ireland Office 341w
Vehicle Inspectorate 425w

Derry
Gas pipelines 342w

Desert storm syndrome
115w, 160–1

Design Council
329w
Finance 329–30w

Design Museum
Finance 329–30w

Detention centres
Hong Kong 231w

Developing countries
Debts 5w, 96–7w, 263–5w

Development aid
Uganda 19

Development Board for Rural Wales
584w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Questions
RNSD Eaglescliffe 385–6w

Devon
Sixth form education 574–5w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (20.07.94) 476–81, 486, 488, 490
Questions
Family credit 200–1w, 255w
Personal income 612–4w

Dewsbury
Tax collection 265w

Diabetic Care Joint Task Force
20w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 51

Diplomatic service
Passports 134–5w

Director General of Electricity Supply
see Office of Electricity Regulation

Director of Passenger Rail Franchising
see Office of Passenger Rail Franchising

Directors
Pay 2w

Disability living allowance
Blind 610w
Judgments 612w
Performance standards 609–11w
Social security appeals 609w, 612w, 627w
Social security claims 612w

Disability working allowance
Civil service manpower 611w

Disciplinary proceedings
Dept of Transport 77w

Discretionary student grants
Expenditure 137w

Discrimination
Handicapped 53w, 263w

Disease control
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 348w

Disposable income
634w

District health authorities
Finance 11w
Labour costs 368w
Legal costs 147w, 361w

District health authorities—continued
Wales 147w

Divorce law
2w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Questions
Roads, Finance 12–3

Docklands light railway
471–3w

Doctors' list of patients
208w, 368–70w
Hornsey 360–1w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 360–1w
Wales 148w

Donaldson Inquiry
see MV Braer Inquiry

Doncaster Health Authority
Public appointments 16w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Questions
Accidents, Inquiries 542–3w
Chartermark scheme, Public bodies 297w
Consultants, Public bodies 547w
Kyle and Carrick District Council, Repairs and maintenance 544w
Road works, Telephone services 423–5w
Scottish Homes 296–7w
Speciality Care 547w
Transport Research Laboratory, Privatisation 250w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Deregulation initiative 425w

Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen, Financial Secretary to the Treasury until 20 July. Thereafter Secretary of State for National Heritage
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill, 1R (18.07.94) 127
Questions
Civil service pensions 92w
Corporation tax, Water companies 92w
Finance bills 6w
Income tax, Rugby 91–2w
Inland Revenue, Accountants 95w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of National Heritage 448–9w
PAYE, Building industry 95–6w
Personal equity plans, Tax allowances 95w
Personal tax allowances, Elderly 93w
Tax allowances, Public service vehicles 5w
Tax allowances, Public transport 5w
Treasury, Civil service pensions 92w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Accidents, Inquiries 542–3w
Air transport, Western Isles 58–9w
Cancer, Scotland 291w
Driving offences, Argyll and Bute 125w
Driving offences, Scotland 125w
Ferries, Isle of Lewis 545w
Free school meals, Scotland 296w
Highlands and Islands Enterprise 293w
Homelessness, Scotland 294w
Housing revenue accounts, Scotland 542w
Kock, Stephen Adolph, Prosecutions 116w
Kyle and Carrick District Council, Repairs and maintenance 544w
Nursery schools, Educational finance 292–3w
Pedestrian crossings, Road accidents 118–20w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 548–50w
Prisoners, Languages 294w
Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 1994 120–1w
Public holidays, Scotland 545w
Public sector housing, Ethnic minorities 545w
Scottish Homes 296–7w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James*—*continued
Scottish Prison Service, Contracts for services 293w

Dounreay
Cancer 121–2w

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 29

Dowd, Mr Jim
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Pay 553w
Learning for work 228–9w
London Underground, South London 1–2

Driving offences
152–4w
Argyll and Bute 125w
Death (21.07.94) 553
Northern Ireland 193w
Public petitions (21.07.94) 553
Scotland 125w

Driving Standards Agency
89–90w
Pay 77–8w

Driving tests
77–8w, 83w, 248w

Drug abuse
(21.07.94) 620–7
Liverpool 498w
Prisoners 286w
Scotland 545w

Drug crimes
Northern Ireland 46w

Drug side effects
Steroid drugs 21w

Dual use goods and technologies
EC action 535w

Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund
254–5w

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Burma, Political prisoners (21.07.94) 630–1
Deregulation, Small businesses (20.07.94) 346–8
European Communities (21.07.94) 596–7, 599, 601–2
European Communities (Community Law) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 198
Executives, Pay (20.07.94) 344
Questions
Nuclear weapons 171

Dunk, Reginald
135–6w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (20.07.94) 351–2
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 270–1
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 414w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 6
Post Office, Privatisation 309

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
Minibuses, Road safety (21.07.94) 564–8, 570
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 129, 134, 141
Questions
Civil servants, Performance appraisal 68–70w, 83–4w
Coastguard Agency, Operating costs 419w
Dept of Transport, Civil service manpower 87–8w
Dept of Transport, Contracts for services 84w
Dept of Transport, Crimes of violence 77w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth*—*continued
Dept of Transport, Efficiency scrutinies 85w, 87w
Dept of Transport, Pay 75–6w
Dept of Transport, Sick leave 78w
Driving Standards Agency 89–90w
Driving tests 77–8w, 83w
HM Coastguard, Civil service manpower 76w
Marine Pollution Control Unit, Manpower 419–20w
Marine Safety Agency, Civil service manpower 75w
Road tax 75w
Road tax, Tax evasion 89w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Pay 251–2w

Durham University
Northern Regional Health Authority 602–3w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 337
Questions
Local government functions, Waste disposal 110–1w
RAF Stanmore Park 166

Eagle, Ms Angela
Questions
Defence industries, Diversification 159
Motorways, Road tolls 4

Early day motions
566–7w

Early retirement
Health service staff 13w

East Africa
Immigration applications 167–8w
Overseas aid 8w, 477w
Refugees 476–7w

East coast railway line
Scotland 68w

East Sussex
Local government reform 307–8w

East Timor
Human rights 18, 134w, 513w

EC action
Air pollution 457w
Dual use goods and technologies 535w
Local government elections (20.07.94) 368
Postal services (18.07.94) 150, 539w
Voting rights (20.07.94) 368

EC Agriculture Council
505–6w

EC aid
Family planning 99w

EC budget
6w

EC Committee of the Regions
29w

EC Cons Doc 7390/92
(18.07.94) 150

EC Cons Doc 7133/93
(18.07.94) 150

EC countries
Animal welfare 349w
Sea pollution 311w
Set-aside schemes 143w

EC Draft 5744/94
(20.07.94) 368

EC Draft 7073/94
(20.07.94) 368

EC external relations
133w

EC external trade
266w

EC Finance Council
94w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
517–8w

EC grants and loans
433–4w
Sea pollution 311–2w

EC immigration
Immigrants' dependants 35w

EC institutions
(21.07.94) 595–604

EC internal trade
Telecommunications industry 328–9w

EC law
Air pollution control 318w
Business 531w
Exhaust emission controls 107w
[illegible]er pollution 456w

EC [illegible]tionals
290–1w

EC Social Charter
326w

EC transport policy
68w

Economic growth
Interest rates 440

Economic policy
(18.07.94) 38–127

Economic situation
(18.07.94) 38–127, 172

Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(19.07.94) 262–79

Education Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Education (Inter-Authority Recoupment) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(18.07.94) 150

Educational assessment
578–9w

Educational finance
579w
Local education authorities (18.07.94) 150
North Yorkshire (20.07.94) 355–7
Nursery schools 292–3w

Educational qualifications
Military bands 388w

Efficiency scrutinies
507–8w
Dept of Transport 85w, 87w

Eggar, Mr Tim*, *Minister for Energy
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Pension funds 536–7w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 332w, 522–3w
British Coal Enterprise 523w
Coal, Railway freight transport 523w
Coal Authority 523w
Coal Industry Act 1994 22w
Coal mine closures, Government assistance 185–8w
Coal mining, Privatisation 329w
Coal mining, Subsidence 528–9w
Coal products, Buy outs 523–4w
Coal stocks 332w
Electricity disconnections 530w
Electricity supply industry 301–2
Electricity tariffs 302
Gas Consumers Council, Gas safety 302–3
Gas interconnectors 331–2w
Gas storage 530w
Gas supply industry 22–3w, 300–1, 334w
Gas supply industry, Competition 21–2w
Gas supply industry, Europe 299–300
Hyload, Privatisation 523w
Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board, Electricity disconnections 530w
Nitric acid, Imports 522w
Nuclear Electric 180w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Finance 531–2w

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Opencast mining, Planning permission 523w
Opencast mining, Privatisation 524w
Public utilities, Powers of entry 531w
Regional electricity companies, Non-fossil fuel obligation 333–4w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Finance 535w

Elderly
Health services 219w
Identity cards 205w
Personal tax allowances 93w

Electricity disconnections
530w
Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board 530w
Merseyside Police 495w
Powers of entry 495w

Electricity interconnectors
Scotland 58w

Electricity supply industry
301–2
Pay 553w

Electricity tariffs
302
Iron and steel industry 301

Elephants
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 316–8w
Nature conservation 316w, 466w

Elletson, Mr Harold
Questions
Dept of Trade and Industry, Information technology 535w
Government departments, Billing 534w
Government research establishments, Performance standards 532–3w
Invest in Britain Bureau, Annual reports 533–4w
National Weights and Measures Laboratory 533w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Finance 535w

Emergency calls
Ambulance services 599w

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 26
Space technology (21.07.94) 581

Emphysema
Industrial diseases benefits 50w, 625–6w

Employment
Exservicemen 164

Employment discrimination
Equal Opportunities Commission 226w
Northern Ireland 46w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 343w

Employment Service Agency
228w

Employment Service local offices
Vacancies 128w

Empty housing
Government departments 323w

Energy consumption
NHS 595–6w

Energy costs
NHS 595w

Energy prices
VAT (21.07.94) 554

English education
VAT exemptions 267w

Enright, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 418, 420, 422
European Communities (Community Law) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 197–8
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 208, 214

Enterprise allowance scheme
404–5w

Entry clearances
160–1w
Administrative delays 27–8w
Bangladesh 289w
Immigrants' dependants 29w
Political refugees 163–6w, 174w

Environment Agency
42w, 323w, 454–5w

Environment protection
(19.07.94) 239–61, 425w
Civil service agencies 341w
Coal mining 455w
Expenditure 38–9w, 46–8w
Litter 320w
Northern Ireland 341w
Road traffic 7–8
Solent 104w

Environmental Claims Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (19.07.94) 194

Environmental health officers
361w

Environmental policy
Scottish Office 541w

Environmentally sensitive areas
503w
Expenditure 352w
Scotland 546–7w
Wales 352w

Equal opportunities
Northern Ireland 192w
Widowers' benefits 629w

Equal Opportunities Commission
Employment discrimination 226w

Essex
Railway travel 70w

Ethnic groups
Kenya 236w

Ethnic minorities
Prison population 278–82w
Public sector housing 545w

Europe
Gas supply industry 299–300

European Commission
174

European Communities
134w, (21.07.94) 595–604

European Communities (Community Law) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
1R (19.07.94) 195–9

European Council
97–8w

European fighter aircraft
Defence procurement 163

European Parliament Members
Fringe benefits 565–6w
Gibraltar 30–1w

European Passenger Services
Channel tunnel 250w
Privatisation 250–1w

European Union (Accessions) Bill 1993/94
Questions
134w

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Maintenance, Children 615–7w

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 216
Questions
Civil service agencies, Annual reports 258w
Defence Analytical Services Agency, Performance standards 379w
Defence procurement 163

Evans, Mr Nigel—continued
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 496w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 417w
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation, Performance standards 380w

Evans, Mr Roger, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security from 20 July
Questions
Abortion, Private health services 367–8w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Annual reports 504w
Confederation of British Industry 329w
EC Agriculture Council 505–6w
Road transport, South London 2–3

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 185

Exchange rates
4w, 431–3w
Inflation 266w

Executives
Pay (20.07.94) 344–6

Exhaust emission controls
91w, 335w
Ambulance services 594w
EC law 107w

Exhaust emissions
Greater London 41w
Pollution monitoring 324–5w
Prosecutions 490w
Road traffic 10–1

Exhibitions
Upper Waiting Hall 7w, 127w, 246w, 450w

Export credit guarantees
330w
Costs 330–1w
Iraq 521–2w
Jordan 22w, 330w
South America 331w

Export licensing
518w

Export Market Information Centre
183w

Exports
Cyprus 513–4w
Telecommunications industry 526w

Exservicemen
163–4, (20.07.94) 326–9, 550–1w, 605w
Ards 335w
Employment 164
Nuclear weapons tests 564–5w
War widows 558w
World War II 189w

External financing limits
British Rail 86w
Railtrack 86w

Extra contractual referrals
604w
Expenditure 20w

Extractive industries
Peat 469w

Extradition
Nadir, Asil 132w
USA 175w

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Questions
Desert storm syndrome 161
Trade competitiveness 311

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Questions
46w

Falkland Islands
Sovereignty 130w

Family credit
200–1w, 255w

Family doctors
220w
Manpower 369w

Family health services authorities
Appeals 17–8w
Deprivation indicators 355–8w
Expenditure 212–4w

Family income
632–4w
Nutrition and health 371w

Family planning
Bilateral aid 99w
EC aid 99w
Overseas aid 98–9w, 224–5w
World Health Organisation 99–100w

Farm Animal Welfare Council
Expenditure 48w

Farms
Arctic fox 347w
Mink 347w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
EC grants and loans 433–4w
One stop shop initiative 179w
Patent Office 331w
Regional selective assistance 23–4w
Road construction, House purchase 418w

Ferranti
Company liquidations 180w
Fraud 394w, 447w

Ferries
Isle of Lewis 545w

Fertility
Medical treatments 363–4w, 600w
Research (20.07.94) 357–8

Festivals and special occasions
World War II 101w, 189w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 185
Questions
Architects Registration Council of the UK 108w
Environment protection, Solent 104w
Set-aside schemes, EC countries 143w
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 236w

Field, Mr Frank
Questions
Maintenance, Children 615w
Single regeneration budget 303–6w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 64–5w
Urban areas, Expenditure 461–2w

Film industry
24w

Finance bills
6w

Financial institutions
Average earnings 430w

Financial services
4w
Fees and charges 5w

Fine defaulters
Prison population 286w

Fire regulations
Working conditions 277w

Fire services
Greater London 485w

Fire stations
Liverpool 490–1w

Firearms
487w
Imports 487w

Firearms*—*continued
Licensing 289–90w

Firearms (Amendment) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Firearms certificates
284–5w

Fires
Multiple occupation 496w

Firing ranges
Kirkcudbright 562w
Shoeburyness 385–6w, 388w

First time buyers
464w

Fish conservation
Cardiff Bay barrage 244w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Business, Profits 437w
Capital, Companies 438–9w
Investment income 434–5w

Fisheries
141w

Flags
Airports 44w
Northern Ireland 44w

Floods
Coventry 315–6w
Llandudno 238w
Water supply industry 315–6w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Air pollution, Greater London (20.07.94) 526, 529–32
Drug abuse (21.07.94) 620–3, 625–6
Oral question time intervention (18.07.94) 9
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 374, 381–2
Questions
Cannabis 566w
House of Commons catering 246w
Maintenance, Children 617–8w
Road traffic, Environment protection 7–8

Food aid
Sudan 100w

Food labelling
Animal welfare 144w

Food poisoning
363w
Scotland 295w

Football pools
Advertising codes of practice 102w
Betting and gaming duties 93w

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Ministerial policy advisors 234w
Small businesses 231–2w

Foreign investment in UK
299, 306
Car industry 305–6
Government assistance 333w
Immigration rules 175w
Japan 305–6
Regional development agencies 297–8
Wales 580–1w

Foreign relations
Malaysia 132w
Nigeria 511w

Forest fires
Radiation hazards 59w

Forestry
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 492–512
Ministerial statements (19.07.94) 177–91
Scotland 541–2w

Forestry Commission
542w
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 492–512

Forestry Commission*—*continued
Ministerial statements (19.07.94) 177–91

Forestry Enterprise
Conflict of interests 58w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 51, 75, 110, 114
Questions
Billing 312–3
Inland Revenue, Accountants 95w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Employment until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
Dept of Employment, Expenditure 67w
EC nationals 290–1w
Employment Service Agency 228w
Handicapped, Dept of Employment 128w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Employment 227w
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service, Contracts for services 64w
Unemployment, Germany 67w
Vacancies, Employment Service local offices 128w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Building regulations, Plumbing 113w
Habitual residence test, Social security benefits rules 620w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State, Dept for Education
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 262–3, 265–6, 270, 272, 275–7
Questions
Cycling, Children 141w
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 137w
Free school meals 301w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for Education 299–300w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept for Education 579w
Road safety education 138w
School administration 579w
Small businesses, Dept for Education 139–40w
Special education 140w
Special education, Appeals 137w
Special education, Conferences 137w
Special schools, Portsmouth 573w
Special schools, School closures 301–2w
Work experience 574w

Foster, Christopher
Coopers and Lybrand 249w
Ministerial policy advisors 249w

Foster, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 267–70, 275
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Voting methods 571w
Non-teaching staff, Training 576–8w
Pre-school education, Local government expenditure 578w
Special schools, Portsmouth 573w
Work experience 574w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 45
Forestry (19.07.94) 188
Parliamentary private secretaries (18.07.94) 35
Questions
Electricity interconnectors, Scotland 58w

Foulkes, Mr George—continued
Local Government Staff Commission Scotland Advisory Committee 119w
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 168

Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Debates etc.
Schools, Sutton Coldfield (21.07.94) 555–9

Fox, Dr Liam, An Assistant Whip
Questions
Industrial relations law 176

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 34

Fraud
Ferranti 394w, 447w
Isle of Man 179w
Ministry of Defence 114w
South Wales 495w

Free school meals
301w
Scotland 296w
Wales 241–2w

Freeman, Rt Hon Roger, Minister of State for Transport until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State for Defence
Debates etc.
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 128–32, 147–9
Questions
Ballistic missile defence, Defence procurement 564w
Bridges, Repairs and maintenance 85w
British Rail, External financing limits 86w
British Rail, Privatisation 67w
British Rail, Public service obligation grant 86w
British Rail Engineering, Asbestosis 88w
Bus services, Competition 70w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 72w, 82–3w
Civil servants, Conflict of interests 557w
Defence contracts, Mergers 562–3w
Defence contracts, Prices 564w
East coast railway line, Scotland 68w
European Passenger Services, Channel tunnel 250w
European Passenger Services, Privatisation 250–1w
Firing ranges, Kirkcudbright 562w
Foster, Christopher, Ministerial policy advisors 249w
Handicapped, Dept of Transport 247–8w
Mines 563w
Minx programme 561w
Mobility of disabled, Taxis 248w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 79–80w, 86w
Network SouthEast, Railway stations 88w
Passenger's Charter, Compensation 85w
Passenger's Charter, Railway timetables 89w
Public transport, South East region 69w
Railtrack, Coopers and Lybrand 249w
Railtrack, Pay 249–50w
Railway freight transport 70w
Railway network, Barking 83w
Railway network, Investment 86–7w
Railway travel, Essex 70w
Railway travel, South West region 76w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway accidents 90w
Union Railways, Land acquisition 90w
West coast railway line 67w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Navy Army and Air Force Institutes 554w
Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority 201–2w
Pension Law Review Committee 258w
Personal equity plans, Tax allowances 95w

Freshwater fishing
Wales 586w

Fringe benefits
European Parliament members 565–6w

Front line initiative
163

Frontiers
Immigration controls 237w

Fry, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 415–8, 422

Fund raising
Conservative Party 416–7w, 434w, 448–9w, 468w, 496w, 565w, 579w, 603w

Funding Agency for Schools
575w

Further education
Age participation rates 573w

Further education colleges
Northern Ireland 335w
Vocational education 228w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Questions
Child care, Public expenditure 117–8w, 146w, 191–2w, 208w, 214w, 292w, 336–7w
Children, Scotland 59w
Computers in National Health Service 243w, 594w
Day care of children 209w
Hospital beds, Mental patients 298w
Hospitals, Planning permission 540w
Housing revenue accounts, Scotland 542w
Mental health community care, Scotland 124w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Scotland 56w
NHS, Information services 603w
NHS, Land acquisition 291–2w
"NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin", Scotland 541w
Nursery schools, Educational finance 292–3w
Optical charges exemptions, Scotland 541w
Out of school child care grant scheme, Wales 147w
Pre-school education, Expenditure 138–9w, 237w
Public sector housing, Ethnic minorities 545w
Scottish Office, Environmental policy 541w

G7
see Group of Seven

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Canterbury City Council 466w
Elephants, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 316–8w
Elephants, Nature conservation 316w
Exservicemen, Employment 164
Non-domestic rates, Non-payment 455w

Gallie, Mr Phil
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 188
Questions
Front line initiative 163

Game
Licensing 289w

Game Act 1831
Questions
289w

Game Licences Act 1860
Questions
289w

Gapes, Mr Mike
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 165

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 371–6

Garnier, Mr Edward
Questions
Animals, International trade 321–2w
Defence procurement, Type 23 frigates 171

Gas Consumers Council
Gas safety 302–3

Gas interconnectors
331–2w

Gas pipelines
Derry 342w

Gas safety
Gas Consumers Council 302–3

Gas storage
530w

Gas supply industry
22–3w, 300–1, 334w
Competition 21–2w
Europe 299–300

Gatwick Airport
Construction 69w

Genetics
Immigration applications 166–8w

Geneva conventions
493w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Green papers, Home Office 485–6w
Green papers, Ministry of Defence 384w
Home Office, Private members' bills 486–7w
Parliamentary questions, Home Office 488w
Parliamentary questions, Ministry of Defence 384w
Peace keeping operations, Armed forces deployment 512w

Geriatric patients
Northern Ireland 343–4w

Germany
Unemployment 67w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 30
Questions
Income support, Homelessness 201w
Social security recipients, Poverty trap 199–200w

Giant hogweed
Scotland 56–7w

Gibraltar
European Parliament members 30–1w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 189
Questions
European Communities 134w

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Debates etc.
Space technology (21.07.94) 574–8, 582, 584
Questions
Aerospace industry 325w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 241
Forestry (19.07.94) 190
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 204
Questions
Carers, Scotland 296w
Deportation, Scotland 276w
Invalid care allowances, Scotland 259w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 548–50w

***Godman, Dr Norman A**—continued*
Prisoners, Languages 294w
Scottish Enterprise 296w
Surgery, Scotland 295w
Wheelchairs, Scotland 294–5w

Goode Committee
see Pension Law Review Committee

***Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair**, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
Burma, Political prisoners (21.07.94) 631–4

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Questions
Docklands light railway 471–3w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 28
Questions
Historic buildings, Town and country planning 448w
Trade competitiveness 308

Gosport Borough Council
Contracts for services 324w

Government
(21.07.94) 613–9

Government assistance to industry
Northern Ireland 340–1w

Government contracts
Northern Ireland Office 347w

Government departments
Billing 313, 534w
Empty housing 323w

Government grants to local authorities
107w

Government research establishments
Performance standards 532–3w

Government securities
428w

GP fundholders
19w, 219w, 604–6w
Finance 359–60w, 369–70w

Grace and favour housing
Kensington Palace 449w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Knight Williams (20.07.94) 338–40
Questions
Sub post offices, Security 305

Grant maintained schools
572–4w
Disclosure of information 568w
Finance 572w
Government grants 567w, 571–2w
School admission 571w
School population 568–72w
Voting methods 571w
Wales 148–50w

Grants for education support and training
578w

Greater London
Air pollution (20.07.94) 512–32
Apprentices 129w
Exhaust emissions 41w
Fire services 485w
Hazardous wastes 307w
Hospital consultants 365w
Lorries 415w
Organised crime 32w
Road traffic 8–10
Unemployment 226w

Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Lords amendts (20.07.94) 297
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Green papers
Home Office 485–6w
Ministry of Defence 384w

Greenbelt
463w
Planning permission 463w
Town and country planning 463w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 263–4, 266–8
Questions
Animal welfare, EC countries 349w
Coal mining, Privatisation 329w
Councillors, Pay 107w
Fire regulations, Working conditions 277w
Official engagements 97w
RAF Northolt, Air transport 414w
Road traffic, Greater London 8–9
Royal yacht, Decommissioning 372w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 10w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Educational finance, North Yorkshire (20.07.94) 355–7

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (20.07.94) 303
Questions
Alternative medicine, Animal products 607w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 497–8w
British Rail, Privatisation 67w
Customs, Animal products 440w
Gas Consumers Council, Gas safety 303

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 262–7, 274–5
Questions
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 44w
Hospital admissions, Wales 586–92w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 328w

Group of Seven
Conferences 2w

Grylls, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Road construction, Compulsory purchase (20.07.94) 325
Questions
Gas interconnectors 331–2w
Iron and steel industry 301

Guatemala
Roads 516w

Guildford Four Inquiry
Costs 15

Gulf Trust
380–1w

***Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn**, Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Dept of the Environment, MINIS 42w
Environment Agency 323w
Local government reform, Transitional arrangements 43w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of the Environment 313w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of the Environment 468w
Waste disposal, Incinerators 323–4w

Gunnell, Mr John
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 72w
Northern Regional Health Authority, Durham University 602–3w
"Permanent Secretarys Handbook" 126w

***Gunnell, Mr John**—continued*
Regional development agencies 298–9

Gwynedd
Rheumatology 238w

Habitual residence test
205–6w
Republic of Ireland 620w
Social security benefits rules 620w

***Hague, Mr William**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State, Dept of Social Security*
Questions
Age addition, Scotland 623w
Belling, Pension funds 628w
Compensation Recovery Unit 608w
Disability living allowance, Blind 610w
Disability living allowance, Performance standards 609–11w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 609w, 612w
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 612w
Disability working allowance, Civil service manpower 611w
Handicap benefits, British residents abroad 619–20w
Handicap benefits, Social security benefits rates 630–2w
Housing benefits 51–2w, 206–7w, 261–4w, 624–5w
Housing benefits, Prisoners 260w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 624w
Housing benefits, Scotland 624w
Housing benefits, Students 50–1w
Housing benefits, War pensions 624w
Identity cards, Elderly 205w
Independent Living Fund 613w
Independent Tribunal Service, Manpower 627w
Industrial diseases benefits, Bronchitis 625–6w
Industrial injuries scheme, Social security benefits rules 620w
Information Technology Services Agency, Civil service manpower 257w
Invalidity benefits, Social security appeals 629w
Mallinson, Eric 611–2w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Social Security 259–60w
National insurance, Computer privacy 50w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 565w
Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority 201–2w
Pension Law Review Committee 258w
Reduced earnings allowance 618w
Rent allowances 629–30w
Rent rebates 206w
RESTART programme, Social security benefits reductions 622w
Scottish Office, Disclosure of information 623w
"Security Equality Choice - Future for Pensions White Paper" 53w
Small businesses, Dept of Social Security 255–6w
Social security abuse 626w
Social security abuse, Identity cards 201w
Social security benefits 620w
Social security benefits overpayment, Personal injury compensation 608–9w
Social security benefits rules, Crime victims 618–9w
Social security payments 620–1w
Social security recipients, Travelling expenses 613w
Social security reform 619w
War pensions, Northern region 621w
War pensions, Shetland 260–2w
Widowers' benefits, Equal opportunities 629w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 42
Members' speeches, Members' personal statements (18.07.94) 35
Questions
Coal stocks 332w
Postal services 327w
Sub post offices, Security 305
Television engineering, Performance standards 184–5w

Haiti
Democracy 131w
Sanctions 131w

Hall, Mr Mike
Questions
Fraud, Ministry of Defence 114w

Hall Sands
Barges 415w

***Hamilton, Mr Neil**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs*
Debates etc.
Newpaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 445–52
Questions
Audit, Self-regulating organisations 535–6w
Audit, Small businesses 537w
Billing 312–3
Billing, Government departments 313
Brewing industry 326w
British Airports Authority, London airports 530w
Business, EC law 531w
Compliance cost assessments 184w
Consumer durables, Labelling 21w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Billing 312
Fraud, Isle of Man 179w
Handicapped, Dept of Trade and Industry 21w
Insurance, Codes of practice 182–3w
Lloyd's of London, Debts 329w
Milk, Agricultural marketing 184w
Nadir, Asil, Bankruptcy 334w
West Cumbria Development Agency, Industrial development 304

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc.
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 134, 137, 146

Handicap benefits
British residents abroad 619–20w
Social security benefits rates 630–2w

Handicapped
Apprentices 403w
Civil rights (19.07.94) 194, (20.07.94) 318
Dept of Employment 128w
Dept of National Heritage 103w
Dept of the Environment 309–10w
Dept of Trade and Industry 21w
Dept of Transport 96w, 247–8w
Discrimination 53w, 263w
Magistrates' courts 407w
Northern Ireland (19.07.94) 194
Northern Ireland Office 336w
Scotland (20.07.94) 318
Scottish Office 292w
Treasury 94w
Unemployment 405w
Welsh Office 147w

Handicapped drivers
Central London 414–5w
Parking offences 414–5w

***Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy**, Minister for the Armed Forces until 20 July*
Questions
Air force 116w
Armed forces, Official residences 62–4w
Armed forces, Redundancy 376w
Armed forces medical services, Hospital closures 60w
Armed forces training 60w
Armed forces training, Otterburn 378w

***Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy**—continued*
Armed forces women, Navy 378w
Arms trade, Saudi Arabia 393w
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear non proliferation 381–2w
Chinook helicopters 381w
Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Finance 377w
Courts martial 381w, 553w
Deal Barracks, Relocation of employees 389w
Defence Analytical Services Agency, Performance standards 379w
Defence contracts 61w
Defence expenditure 374w, 383w
Defence research establishments, Income 387–9w
Desert storm syndrome 115w, 160–1
Exservicemen 163–4
Exservicemen, Employment 164
Fraud, Ministry of Defence 114w
Green papers, Ministry of Defence 384w
Gulf Trust 380–1w
Marsh Arabs, Oppression 372w
Menwith Hill, Planning permission 393w
Military aircraft, Low flying 374w
Military bands 375w
Military bands, Armed forces training 375w, 389–90w
Military bands, Deal Barracks 375–6w, 389–90w
Ministerial policy advisors, Ministry of Defence 384–5w
Ministers' visits abroad, Belize 114w
Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry 64w
NATO, Defence expenditure 382–3w
NATO, Peace keeping operations 116w
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation 380w
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation, Performance standards 380w
Naval bases, Portland 391–2w
Naval Support Command, Manpower 391–2w
Nuclear non proliferation 114w
Nuclear weapons tests, Christmas Island 115–6w
Official gifts 60–2w
Parliamentary questions, Ministry of Defence 384w
Partnership for peace 116w
Porton Down 382w
Rio Declaration 377–8w
RNAD Trecwn 386w
RNAS Culdrose, Helicopters 392–3w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 385–6w
Royal yacht 168–9
Royal yacht, Decommissioning 372w
Templar Barracks 390–1w

Hannam, Sir John
Questions
Audit, Self-regulating organisations 535–6w
Audit, Small businesses 537w
British Coal Corporation, Pension funds 536–7w
Dual use goods and technologies, EC action 535w
Gas supply industry 300
Regional challenge 537–8w

Hanson, Mr David
Questions
Child Support Agency, Andersen Consulting 197w
Exhaust emission controls 91w, 335w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Church of England, Legal aid (19.07.94) 282
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 257–8
Questions
Defence contracts, Private sector 166
Trade competitiveness 311

Harman, Ms Harriet
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 111–7, 120

***Harman, Ms Harriet**—continued*
Questions
Housing benefits 261–4w
Rent rebates 206w
Rents 472w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 371
Questions
Coastguard Agency, Performance standards 251w

Hartlepool power station
Railway accidents 90w

Harvey, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 220–2, 225
Questions
Environmentally sensitive areas 503w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 6–7

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 270, 272
Questions
Defence Research Agency, Performance standards 378w
Radar, Defence contracts 379w

Hazardous wastes
Greater London 307w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 94, 99
Questions
London Pensions Fund Authority 108w

Health authorities
Expenditure 593w

Health education
Inter agency cooperation 218w
Publicity 595–6w

Health hazards
Dental services 213w

"Health of the Nation White Paper"
605–6w
Costs 603–4w

Health service staff
Contracts of employment 365–6w
Early retirement 13w
Northern Ireland 444–6w
Official secrets 365–6w
Parental leave 366–7w
Wales 591–2w

Health services
218–9w
Cancer 18–9w
Crime victims 219w
Elderly 219w
Expenditure 593w
Performance standards 597–8w

Health visitors
Scotland 122–3w

Healthcall
364–5w

***Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David**, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office until 20 July. Thereafter Paymaster-General*
Debates etc.
Latin America (20.07.94) 465–70
Questions
Belize, Road construction 477w
Belize, Roads 516w
Chichester, Giles 512w
China, Nuclear weapons tests 131–2w
Colombia, Human rights 515w
Cyprus, Exports 513–4w
EC external relations 133w
European Communities 134w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David*—*continued
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 130w
Gibraltar, European Parliament Members 30–1w
Hong Kong, Criminal investigation 229–31w
Israel, Occupied territories 232–3w
Kuwait, Overseas trade 232w
Ministerial policy advisors, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 234w
Nadir, Asil, Extradition 132w
North Korea, Nuclear non proliferation 132–3w
North Korea, South Korea 514w
Peace keeping operations, Armed forces deployment 512w
St Helena, Immigration controls 30w
Sudan, Armed conflict 132w
Turkey, Human rights 515–6w
Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Annual reports 516–7w

Hedges and ditches
Nature conservation 470w

Helicopters
RNAS Culdrose 392–3w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Local government elections, Local government reform 309w
Regional selective assistance 334w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 26
Questions
Coal mining, Planning permission 319–20w
Manufactured exports 313–4
Personal tax allowances, Elderly 93w

Heppell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 130–1, 141–3

Hercules aircraft
114w
Defence procurement 162, 372w

Hereford and Worcester
Local government reform (20.07.94) 329–30, 331

***Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael**, President of the Board of Trade*
Questions
Cable systems 531w
Companies Registration Office (England and Wales) 181w
Confederation of British Industry 329w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Information technology 535w
Foreign investment in UK 299
Government departments, Billing 534w
Government research establishments, Performance standards 532–3w
Industrial health and safety, Nitric acid 522w
Industrial production 524–6w
Industrial production, Labour costs 526–7w
Invest in Britain Bureau, Annual reports 533–4w
Metrication, Orders and regulations 182w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Trade and Industry 538w
National Weights and Measures Laboratory 533w
Parliamentary questions, Costs 527–8w
Post Office 326w
Post Office, Privatisation 308–10
Post Office Counters, Administrative costs 312
Post offices, Rural areas 326w
Postal services, EC action 539w
Regional challenge 537–8w
Regional development agencies 298–9

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael*—*continued
Regional development agencies, Foreign investment in UK 297–8
Small businesses, Dept of Trade and Industry 519–21w
Telecommunications industry, EC internal trade 328–9w
Telecommunications industry, Exports 526w
Trade associations 325w
Trade competitiveness 306–8, 328w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 210, 224

Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 70–3
Questions
Local government reform, West Sussex 307–8w

Higher civil servants
507w

Higher education colleges
Property transfer 244w
Wales 244w

Highlands and Islands Airports
299–300w

Highlands and Islands Enterprise
293w

Highlands of Scotland
Veterinary services 544w

Highways Agency
82w

Hill, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Air pollution, Greater London (20.07.94) 512–5
Questions
London Transport, Capital investment 422w
London Underground, South London 3
Minx programme 561w

Hill Samuel Bank and United Dominions Trust Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
3R* (19.07.94) 159
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Hinchingbrooke Hospital
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 394–406
Maternity services (20.07.94) 394–406

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Coal mining, Subsidence 528–9w
Disability living allowance, Blind 610w
Disability living allowance, Performance standards 610–1w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 612w
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 612w
Disability working allowance, Civil service manpower 611w
Fertility, Medical treatments 600w
Hong Kong, Animal products 514w
Horbury Convent, Property transfer 244w
Income support, Scotland 623w
Income tax, Rugby 91–2w
Independent Tribunal Service, Manpower 627w
Mallinson, Eric 611–2w
Rhinoceros, Africa 466–7w
Rhinoceros, Nature conservation 466w
Social security abuse 626w
Social Security Agency district offices 626–8w

Historic buildings
Town and country planning 448w

HIV infection
362w
Prisoners 498w

HM Coastguard
Civil service manpower 76w

HMS Osprey
Capital investment 392w

HMSO
Performance standards 507w

Hodge, Ms Margaret
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (21.07.94) 605–8, 611
Oldchurch Hospital, Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 154–5
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 72w, 82–3w
Railway network, Barking 83w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Debates etc.
Oval cricket ground (20.07.94) 331–4

***Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas**, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Burundi, Armed conflict 25w
EC Committee of the Regions 29w
Export licensing 518w
International War Crimes Tribunal 27w
Malaysia 30w
Rwanda, Peace keeping operations 26w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 25w
UN Security Council, Rwanda 26w

Home care services
Mentally ill 604w

Home Office
Departmental publications 34w
Green papers 485–6w
Information technology 177w
Ministerial policy advisors 276–7w
Ministers' visits abroad 496w
Parliamentary questions 488w
Private members' bills 486–7w
Public bills 486–7w
Small businesses 483–4w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Questions
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 297–8w

Homelessness
Income support 201w
Ministerial statements (18.07.94) 21–35
Public sector housing (18.07.94) 21–35
Scotland 294w

Homeopathy
Mossley Hill Hospital 20w, 216–7w

Homicide
Children 269w

Hong Kong
Animal products 514w
British national (overseas) 27w
Citizenship of the British dependent territories 26–7w
Criminal investigation 229–31w
Detention centres 231w
Immigration applications 170–3w
Official residences 514w
Vietnamese refugees 231w, 512–3w

Horbury Convent
Property transfer 244w

Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 112
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 30

Hornsey
Doctors' list of patients 360–1w

Horses
Rural planning 318–9w

Horticultural Development Council
355–6w

Hospital admissions
Asthma 363w
Wales 586–92w

Hospital beds
Mental patients 298w
Scotland 298w

Hospital closures
Armed forces medical services 60w, 596w
Northern General Hospital Sheffield (19.07.94) 288

Hospital consultants
366w
Greater London 365w

Hospital waiting lists
215w, 600w
NHS trusts 364w

Hospitals
Armed forces medical services 596w
Planning permission 540w
Scotland 540w
Tobacco 595w
Water pollution 594w

House of Commons catering
246w
Veal 246w

House of Commons Commission
Small businesses 449w

House of Commons questions
3w
Costs 91w

House of Commons reform
(20.07.94) 360–2

House purchase
Road construction 418w

House renovation grants
465w

Housing
Community care 462w
Northern Ireland 442–3w
Wales 238w

Housing action trusts
(18.07.94) 150
Kingston upon Hull 468w

Housing association grant
459w

Housing benefits
51–2w, 206–7w, 261–4w, 624–5w
Prisoners 260w
Private rented housing 624w
Scotland 624w
Students 50–1w
War pensions 624w

Housing construction
303w
Housing Corporation 460w
Public sector housing 460w

Housing Corporation
Housing construction 460w

Housing policy
Northern Ireland 442w

Housing revenue accounts
Scotland 542w

Housing starts
Northern Ireland 339w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**, Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Betting shops 153w
Drug abuse, Liverpool 498w
Firearms, Licensing 289–90w
Firearms certificates 284–5w
Game, Licensing 289w
Green papers, Home Office 485–6w
Home Office, Departmental publications 34w
Home Office, Information technology 177w
Home Office, Private members' bills 486–7w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**—continued*
Ministerial policy advisors, Home Office 276–7w
Ministers' visits abroad, Home Office 496w
Parliamentary questions, Home Office 488w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 38w
Prison Service Agency, Pay incentives 493w
Small businesses, Home Office 483–4w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Questions
Invalidity benefits, Social security appeals 629w
Training, Industrial injuries scheme 405w

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 242–7
Economic situation (18.07.94) 120
Pollution, Derbyshire (20.07.94) 538–9
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 231–2
Questions
Exhaust emission controls, EC law 107w
Exhaust emissions, Pollution monitoring 324–5w
Public records 81w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Blood donors 605w
Military aircraft, Defence procurement 114w
Prison Service Agency, Pay incentives 493w

Hualon Corporation
339–40w
Government assistance 333w
Northern Ireland 333w

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 259

Hughes, Mr Robert G, An Assistant Whip until 20 July. Thereafter Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service and Science
Questions
Efficiency scrutinies 507–8w
HMSO, Performance standards 507w
Ministerial policy advisors, Political parties 506w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 240, 257–9
Questions
Air pollution, Disclosure of information 43–4w
Air pollution, Urban areas 325w
Food labelling, Animal welfare 144w
Non-governmental organisations, Finance 16–7
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment 90w

Human rights
Children 10w
Colombia 515w
East Timor 18, 134w, 513w
Turkey 515–6w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Gas pipelines, Derry 342w
Housing, Northern Ireland 442–3w
Housing policy, Northern Ireland 442w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 443w

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for Employment until 20 July. Thereafter Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**—continued*
Questions
Civil servants, Complaints 508–9w
Higher civil servants 507w
International Labour Organisation, Treaties 228w
Sexual harassment 508w
Small businesses, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 506w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 64–5w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Community care 215w
NHS trusts, NHS and private practice 15–6w

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 517–8w
Subsidiarity 516w

Hutton, Mr John
Questions
Armed forces, Alcoholism 556–7w
Courts martial, Alcoholism 558w
Defence procurement 167

Hyload
Privatisation 523w

Identity cards
33–4w, 289w, 492w
Elderly 205w
Social security abuse 201w

Illegal immigrants
169w
Immigrant detainees 165–6w

Immigrant detainees
169–72w, 175w, 270–4w, 489–90w
Illegal immigrants 165–6w
Immigration rules 162w
Vietnamese refugees 231w

Immigrants' dependants
EC immigration 35w
Entry clearances 29w
Immigration applications 35–8w, 161–4w, 274–5w

Immigration
Research 489w

Immigration appeals
163w, 408–13w

Immigration applications
154w, 169w
Bangladesh 235w
East Africa 167–8w
Genetics 166–8w
Hong Kong 170–3w
Immigrants' dependants 35–8w, 161–4w, 274–5w
India 167–8w
Indian subcontinent 135–6w, 154–60w, 169w
Medical examinations 161w, 170w
Pakistan 161–2w, 514–5w
Political refugees 37–8w, 173–4w, 275–6w
Russia 172w
Working holidays 270w

Immigration controls
Frontiers 237w
St Helena 30w

Immigration officers
Bangladesh 235w

Immigration rules
Foreign investment in UK 175w
Immigrant detainees 162w
Overseas workers 35w

Imphal Barracks
555w

Import controls
Beef 175

Imports
430w

Imports—continued
Firearms 487w
Nitric acid 458–9w, 522w

Incinerators
Waste disposal 323–4w

Income support
255w
Derbyshire 622w
Homelessness 201w
Scotland 622–3w
Stockport 621–2w
Young people 627–8w

Income tax
Rugby 91–2w

Independent Living Fund
613w

Independent Tribunal Service
202w
Manpower 627w

Index of urban deprivation
Single regeneration budget 461w

India
Immigration applications 167–8w

Indian subcontinent
Immigration applications 135–6w, 154–60w, 169w
Visas 28–9w

Industrial development
West Cumbria Development Agency 304

Industrial diseases benefits
Bronchitis 50w, 625–6w
Emphysema 50w, 625–6w

Industrial disputes
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers 4–7, 79–80w, 86w, 174, 417w, 421–2w

Industrial estates
Belfast 189w
Welsh Development Agency 146w

Industrial health and safety
Nitric acid 522w

Industrial injuries scheme
Social security benefits rules 620w
Training 405w

Industrial production
332w, 434w, 438w, 524–6w
Labour costs 526–7w

Industrial relations law
176

Industrial tribunals
66–7w
Northern Ireland 45w

Infant mortality
358–9w

Inflation
436–7w
Exchange rates 266w

Information services
Dept of Health 364w
Dept of Trade and Industry 331w
NHS 603w

Information technology
Dept of Trade and Industry 535w
Home Office 177w

Information Technology Services Agency
258w
Civil service manpower 257w

Inland Revenue
Accountants 95w
Liverpool 437w

Inquiry Reporter
546w

Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Institute of Food Research
Expenditure 350w
Scientists 254w

Insurance
Codes of practice 182–3w

Insurance Premium Tax (Taxable Insurance Contracts) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(18.07.94) 150

Inter agency cooperation
Health education 218w

Interest payments
Child Support Agency 49w

Interest rates
Economic growth 440w

International cooperation
Defence research 383w

International Labour Organisation
Treaties 228w, 406w

International trade
Animals 321–2w

International War Crimes Tribunal
27w

Intimidation
Newtownabbey 441w

Invalid care allowances
Scotland 259w

Invalidity benefits
Social security appeals 629w
Social security benefits disqualification 52–4w

Invest in Britain Bureau
Annual reports 533–4w

Investment income
434–5w

Investment trusts
435w

Investor protection
4w
Personal pensions (20.07.94) 348–50

Investors in people
404w

Iraq
Arms trade 538w
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 542–4
Export credit guarantees 521–2w

Ireland
Occupational health 338w

Iron and steel industry
301, 328w
Electricity tariffs 301
Subsidies 315–6

Isle of Dogs enterprise zone
Tax allowances 438w

Isle of Lewis
Ferries 545w

Isle of Man
Fraud 179w

Israel
Occupied territories 232–3w

Italy
Wheat 347–8w

Jack, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural land, Staveley 503w
Arable area payments scheme, Agricultural production 354w
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Annual reports 504w
EC Agriculture Council 505–6w
Environmentally sensitive areas 503w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Expenditure 352w
Fisheries 141w

Jack, Mr Michael—continued
Ministerial policy advisors, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 349w
Nutrition and health, Family income 371w
Set-aside schemes 503–4w
Set-aside schemes, EC countries 143w
Tree planting 353w
Wheat, Agricultural production 352–4w
Wheat, Italy 347–8w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
Burma, Political prisoners (21.07.94) 630
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 143–4
Questions
Road traffic, Greater London 9

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Debates etc.
Northern General Hospital Sheffield, Children's hospitals (19.07.94) 288
Parliamentary questions (18.07.94) 36
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 226–8
Questions
Building alterations, Planning permission 40w
Iron and steel industry, Electricity tariffs 301

James, Gerald
Criminal investigation 554w

Jamieson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 263, 272–3, 276
Parliamentary questions (18.07.94) 36–7
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 210, 230–1
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 246w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Costs 15
National Consumer Council, Finance 314–5
Royal Naval Engineering College, Armed forces civilians 558w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Armed forces, Redundancy 376w
Industrial tribunals 66–7w
Industrial tribunals, Northern Ireland 45w
Road safety education 138w

Japan
Foreign investment in UK 305–6

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 43, 50
European Communities (21.07.94) 595–8
European Communities (Community Law) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 195–7
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 32
Questions
Post Office, Privatisation 310
Railway travel, Essex 70w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 33
Questions
Road traffic, Greater London 10

Job review workshops
397–400w

Job search seminars
395–6w

Jobclubs
395–6w

Jobplan workshops
399–401w

Jobseeker's allowance
53w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 33
Questions
Defence contracts, Private sector 165–6
Trade competitiveness 307–8

Jones, Mr Gwilym, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Questions
Cancer, Wales 146–7w, 237–8w
"Caring for the Future", Costs 148w
Child care, Public expenditure 146w
Computers in National Health Service 243w
Council tax, Valuation 242w
Dentists, Wales 243w
District health authorities, Legal costs 147w
Doctors' list of patients, Wales 148w
Handicapped, Welsh Office 147w
Hospital admissions, Wales 586–92w
NHS trusts, Management consultants 8w
Nurses' training, Expenditure 240w
Nurses' training, Wales 240–1w
Project 2000, Expenditure 241–2w
Welsh Water Authority 244w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Asthma, Medical equipment 363w
"Caring for the Future", Costs 148w
Doctors' list of patients 368–70w
Doctors' list of patients, Wales 148w
Probate, Welsh language 1w

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 234
Questions
Alternative medicine 216w
Alternative medicine, Complaints 216w
District health authorities, Legal costs 147w, 361w

Jones, Dr Lynne
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 33–4
Prostitution (19.07.94) 289–94
Questions
Armed forces, Redundancy 563w
Armed forces recruitment 563w
Child Support Agency, Andersen Consulting 256–7w
Child Support Agency, Publications 49–50w
East Timor, Human rights 513w
Peace keeping operations, Publications 556w
Prison population, Young offenders 484w
Rwanda, Departmental correspondence 474w
Student grants 300w
Teenage pregnancy 606w
Working mothers, Breast feeding 65w
Young offenders, Sentencing 269w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Questions
Kuwait, Overseas trade 232w
Nuclear Electric 180w
Prescriptions 592w
Science Museum 103w
Telecommunications industry, Telephone services 180w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 182

Jordan
Export credit guarantees 22w, 330w

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Questions
NHS finance 19w

Judgments
Disability living allowance 612w

Judicial review
Coroners 495w

Karibi-Whyte, Adolphus Godwin
478w

Kashmir
Debts 96–7w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 27–8

Keen, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Environmental Claims Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 194

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 264, 267
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 27
Kinnock, Neil, European Commission (18.07.94) 36
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 208
Questions
Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund 254–5w

Kennedy, Mrs Jane
Questions
Malone, Paul, Miscarriages of justice 494w

Kennedy and Donkin
British Library 102w

Kensington Palace
Grace and favour housing 449w

Kent
Local government reform (20.07.94) 350–3

Kenya
Ethnic groups 236w

Key, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport until 20 July
Questions
A259, Road works 72–3w
Benzene 74w
Cars, Costs 87w
Cycling 71w
Dept of Transport, Pay 75–6w
Driving Standards Agency 89–90w
Driving tests 77–8w, 83w, 248w
Exhaust emission controls 91w
Highways Agency 82w
Lorries 69–70w
Motorways, Road accidents 248w
Motorways, Road safety 247w
Motorways, Road traffic 72w
Road accidents, Pedestrians 84–5w
Road construction, Cost benefit analysis 73w
Road safety barriers 71w
Road signs 68w
Road tax 75w
Road tax, Tax evasion 89w, 252–3w
Road traffic, Environment protection 7–8
Roads 8
Safety belts, Minibuses 247w
Severn bridge, Toll bridges 81w
Speed limits 249w
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment 90w
Transport Research Laboratory, Privatisation 250w
Twyford Down, Private detectives 73w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Pay 251–2w

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Questions
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service, Contracts for services 64w

Kilfedder, Sir James
Questions
Northern Ireland Dept of the Environment, Civil service agencies 443–4w
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Civil service agencies 195w

King, Rt Hon Tom
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats, Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 240

Kingston upon Hull
Housing action trusts 468w

Kirkcudbright
Firing ranges 562w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Forestry Commission (20.07.94) 492–9, 510
Questions
Child Support Agency 50w
EC budget 6w
Environment Agency 42w
Finance bills 6w
Gas supply industry 22–3w
GP fundholders 19w
Habitual residence test 205–6w
Handicapped, Discrimination 53w
Jobseeker's allowance 53w
Mass media, Ownership 24w
Mental Health Act 1983 19w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 557w
Nurses' training, Northern Ireland 194w
Nurses' training, Scotland 298w, 548w
Nurses' training, Teachers 193–4w
Post Office, Privatisation 22w
Project 2000, Scotland 299w
Queen's speech 7w
"Security Equality Choice - Future for Pensions White Paper" 53w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 450w
Local government reform 42–3w

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Hedges and ditches, Nature conservation 470w
Motorways, Road tolls 3

Knight Williams
(20.07.94) 338–40

Knox, Sir David
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 7w
Lone parent families, Standard of living 257–8w
Roads 8

Kock, Stephen Adolph
Prosecutions 116w

Kuwait
Overseas trade 232w
Prisoners of war (20.07.94) 358–9

Kyle and Carrick District Council
Repairs and maintenance 544w

Kynoch, Mr George
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 265
Forestry (19.07.94) 186
Questions
Council tax, Scotland 545–6w
Dounreay, Cancer 121–2w
Drug abuse, Scotland 545w
Independent Tribunal Service 202w
Local government staff, Scotland 546w
Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 1994 120–1w
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Annual reports 119w
Water and sewerage companies, Scotland 119–20w

Labelling
Consumer durables 21w

Labour costs
District health authorities 368w
Industrial production 526–7w
Regional health authorities 368w

Labour force survey
401–3w

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Questions
A239, Road works 72–3w
Regional development agencies, Foreign investment in UK 297–8
Rural planning, Horses 318–9w

Land acquisition
NHS 291–2w
Union Railways 90w
Welsh Development Agency 582–3w

Land Drainage Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Land ownership and tenure
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation 585w

Land pollution
Asbestos 457–8w
Planning permission 457–8w

Landlord and tenant
Business premises 111–3w
Public houses (20.07.94) 331–4

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Forestry, Ministerial statements (19.07.94) 177–91
Questions
Chartermark scheme, Public bodies 297w
Computer privacy, National insurance 547–8w
Consultants, Public bodies 547w
Drug abuse, Scotland 545w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 546–7w
Highlands and Islands Airports 299–300w
Inquiry Reporter 546w
Local government staff, Scotland 546w
M8, Road works 544–5w
Ministerial policy advisors, Scottish Office 293–4w
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Annual reports 119w
Scottish Office, Environmental policy 541w
Scottish Office, Publicity 539w
Veterinary services, Highlands of Scotland 544w
Water and sewerage companies, Scotland 119–20w
Wheelchairs, Scotland 124w

Languages
Prisoners 294w

Latin America
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 453–70

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Debates etc.
Alcoholic drinks duties, Beer (20.07.94) 342–4
Questions
Betting shops 153w
Firearms, Licensing 289–90w
Game, Licensing 289w
Home Office, Information technology 177w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 38w
Serious Fraud Office 14

Learning for work
228–9w

Leasehold housing
Council house sales 471w

Leek-Rushton bypass
8

Legal aid
408w
Church of England (19.07.94) 281–7

Legal Aid Advisory Committee
223w

Legal Aid Fund
224w

Legal costs
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust 360w
District health authorities 147w, 361w

Legal opinion
Armed forces 553w

Legg, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 105–6

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
European Communities (21.07.94) 599

Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office until 20 July
Questions
Africa, Ministerial statements 130w
Algeria, Armed conflict 133w
Australia, Computer privacy 26w
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 235w
Bangladesh, Immigration officers 235w
Bangladesh, Temporary immigrants 235–6w
Burundi, Armed conflict 25–6w
Burundi, Arms trade 135w
Children, Human rights 10w
Commonwealth of Independent States, Visas 29w
Diplomatic service, Passports 134–5w
Dunk, Reginald 135–6w
East Africa, Overseas aid 8w
East Timor, Human rights 134w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 27–8w
Entry clearances, Immigrants' dependants 29w
Family planning, Bilateral aid 99w
Family planning, EC aid 99w
Family planning, Overseas aid 98–9w, 224–5w
Family planning, World Health Organisation 99–100w
Haiti, Democracy 131w
Haiti, Sanctions 131w
Hong Kong, British national (overseas) 27w
Hong Kong, Citizenship of the British dependent territories 26–7w
Hong Kong, Detention centres 231w
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 231w
Indian subcontinent, Visas 28–9w
Kenya, Ethnic groups 236w
Lorry drivers, Prisoners 234w
Malaysia, Foreign relations 132w
Mozambique, RENAMO 236–7w
Non-governmental organisations, Finance 16–7
Overseas aid 11w, 20
Overseas aid, Children 225w
Overseas aid, Defence expenditure 11w
Overseas aid, Politics and government 8w
Palestinians, Overseas aid 9w
Russia, Immigration applications 172w
Rwanda, Armed conflict 100–1w
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 233w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 10w
Small businesses, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 231–2w
Somalia, Overseas aid 100w
Sudan, Food aid 100w
Sudan, Refugees 100w
Taiwan, Visas 234w
Tigers, Nature conservation 30w
Uganda, Development aid 19
UN Conference on Population and Development 17–8, 99w
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 236w
UN Security Council 233–4w
UNICEF, UK contributions 10w
Vietnamese refugees 130–1w
Vietnamese refugees, Repatriation 130w

Lerwick Harbour Order Confirmation Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Burma, Political prisoners (21.07.94) 628–30

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
"Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies Consultation Paper" 310w
Child minding, Corporal punishment 215w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Concessionary television licences 174

Liddell, Helen
Maiden speeches (18.07.94) 81–3

Liddell, Helen
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 81–3

Lidington, Mr David
Debates etc.
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 273–4
Forestry (19.07.94) 186
Questions
Coal mine closures, Government assistance 185–8w
Companies Registration Office (England and Wales) 181w
Compliance cost assessments 184w
Diplomatic service, Passports 134–5w
Export Market Information Centre 183w
Insurance, Codes of practice 182–3w
Members' correspondence 503w
Metrication, Orders and regulations 182w
Milk, Agricultural marketing 184w
Pensioners, Personal income 202–6w
Uganda, Development aid 19

Lighting
Palace of Westminster 126w

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Social Security
Questions
Civil service agencies, Annual reports 258w
Independent Tribunal Service 202w
Ministers' visits abroad 619w
Pensioners, Personal income 202–6w
Social Security Benefits Agency 259w

Listed buildings
Bedford 42w
Royal Marine School of Music 561w

Litter
Environment protection 320w

Liverpool
Drug abuse 498w
Fire stations 490–1w
Inland Revenue 437w
Unemployment 396w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Questions
Brent Borough Council, Local government social services 361–2w

Llandough Hospital NHS Trust
Community health services 585w

Llandudno
Bellwin scheme 238w
Floods 238w

Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter, Minister of State, Home Office until 20 July
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison 178w
Computer privacy, Criminal records 176w
Immigrant detainees 271–4w
McGhee, Charles 31–2w
National Lottery Charities Board 269–70w
Prison accommodation 175–6w, 283w

Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Prison administration 176w
Prison population 281–3w, 286–9w
Prison population, Age 283w
Prison population, Ethnic minorities 278–82w
Prison population, Fine defaulters 286w
Prison Service Agency, Publications 32–3w
Prison staff, Manpower 290w
Prisoners 281w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 286w
Prisoners, Per capita costs 278w
Prisoners, Suicide 283–4w
Prisons 285–6w
Race equality councils 277–8w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Business start-up scheme 404–5w
Community action 402w
Construction, Student numbers 575–6w
Further education, Age participation rates 573w
Income support, Young people 627–8w
Investors in people 404w
Job review workshops 397–400w
Jobclubs 395–6w
Jobplan workshops 399–401w
National vocational qualifications 404w
RESTART programme 631–2w
Training, Expenditure 403–4w
Training credits 405w
Unemployment, Handicapped 405w
Vacancies 397w
Workstart 404w
Youth unemployment 405w

Lloyd's of London
Debts 329w
Ministers 551–2w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 191
Questions
Benzene 74w
Concessionary television licences, Blind 24w
Dentists, Wales 243w
Welsh Consumer Council 581w

Local authorities
463w

Local authority powers
Markets 467w

Local education authorities
Educational finance (18.07.94) 150
Special education (18.07.94) 150

Local enterprise agencies
Belfast 189–90w

Local government
(21.07.94) 613–9

Local government elections
EC action (20.07.94) 368
Local government reform 309w

Local government expenditure
315w
Pre-school education 578w

Local government finance
107w

Local government functions
Waste disposal 110–1w, 310w

Local government reform
42–3w
Basildon (20.07.94) 358–9
East Sussex 307–8w
Hereford and Worcester (20.07.94) 329–30, 331
Kent (20.07.94) 350–3
Local government elections 309w
Transitional arrangements 43w
West Sussex 307–8w

Local government revenue
Non-domestic rates 455w

Local government services
Construction 108–10w
Contracts for services 108–10w

Local Government Shadow Staff Commission Scotland
546w

Local government social services
Brent Borough Council 361–2w

Local government staff
Scotland 546w

Local Government Staff Commission Scotland Advisory Committee
119w

Lockerbie
Bombings 97w

London airports
British Airports Authority 530w

London Buses
Privatisation 71w

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

London Local Authorities Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

London Pensions Fund Authority
108w

London Transport
Capital investment 422w
Public appointments 82w

London Underground
South London 1–3

Londonderry
Shopping centres 44–5w

Lone parent families
Standard of living 257–8w

Lord, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 183

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Contracts for services 1w
Finance 1–2w
Ministerial policy advisors 224w
Small businesses 408w

Lord President of the Council
Small businesses 237w

Lorries
69–70w
Greater London 415w

Lorry drivers
Prisoners 234w

Low flying
Military aircraft 374w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 246
Cyprus (20.07.94) 416
Questions
Electricity supply industry 301–2

Luff, Mr Peter
Questions
Bridges, Worcester City Council 450w
Legal Aid Advisory Committee 223w
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 168

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 16
Centre for Policy Studies 31w
Charrington, Brian 31w
Contracts for services, Attorney General 31w
Ferranti, Fraud 394w
Ministerial policy advisors, Attorney General 394w

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas—continued
Nazi war crimes, Prosecutions 14–6
Serious Fraud Office 13–4
Small businesses, Attorney General 445–7w

Lynne, Ms Liz
Questions
Breast cancer 16–7w
Cancer, Health services 18–9w
Centre for Policy Studies 31w
Psychology, Manpower 220w

M8
Road works 544–5w

McAllion, Mr John
Questions
East coast railway line, Scotland 68w
Homelessness, Scotland 294w
Police Core and Ancillary Tasks Review 493–4w

McCartney, Mr Ian
Questions
Desert storm syndrome 115w
Mental health services, Prisoners 594–5w
Mentally ill, Young people 444w
Prisoners, Mental health services 491w
Prisoners, NHS trusts 492w
Prisoners, Private health services 491–2w

Macclesfield
Unemployment 173

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 186
Questions
Air transport, Western Isles 58–9w
Ferries, Isle of Lewis 545w
Scottish Natural Heritage, Conflict of interests 58w
Tanker ships, Minches 73w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Forestry Commission (20.07.94) 494, 499–505, 510–1
Questions
Post Office Counters, Administrative costs 312
Scottish Office, Publicity 539w

McGhee, Charles
31–2w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Transport until 20 July
Questions
Dept of Transport, Civil service manpower 87–8w
London Transport, Public appointments 82w
Motorways 3–4
Motorways, Road tolls 3–4
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 5–7
Network SouthEast, Performance standards 4–5
Road finance 11–2
Road traffic, Exhaust emissions 10–1
Roads, Finance 12–3
Safety belts, Minibuses 81–2w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Gas Consumers Council, Gas safety 302–3
Inquiry Reporter 546w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Orsett Hospial, Public petitions (19.07.94) 287–8
Questions
British Airports Authority, London airports 530w
East Africa, Overseas aid 477w
East Africa, Refugees 476–7w
Exservicemen 550–1w
Exservicemen, Ards 335w
Exservicemen, War widows 558w
Local authorities 463w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew*—*continued
National service, Medals 550w
Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, Expenditure 415–6w
Public transport, South East region 69w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 474–6w
Somalia, Overseas aid 475w
Somalia, Refugees 475–6w
Union Railways, Land acquisition 90w
War widows 549–50w
World War II, Festivals and special occasions 189w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (21.07.94) 623–7
Prostitution (19.07.94) 292–6
Questions
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 497–8w
Animal experiments, Toxicology 497w
Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 153–4w
Bouncers 494w
Computer privacy, Criminal records 487–9w
Coroners, Judicial review 495w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 149–52w, 496–7w
Driving offences 152–4w
Exhaust emissions, Prosecutions 490w
Extradition, USA 175w
Fire services, Greater London 485w
Fire stations, Liverpool 490–1w
Firearms 487w
Firearms, Imports 487w
Fraud, South Wales 495w
Geneva conventions 493w
Homicide, Children 269w
Identity cards 492w
Immigrant detainees 175w, 489–90w
Immigration, Research 489w
Malone, Paul, Miscarriages of justice 494w
Members' correspondence 503w
Merseyside Police, Electricity disconnections 495w
Miscarriages of justice 34–5w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 496w
Multiple occupation, Fires 496w
National Association of Victims' Support Schemes 178w
Organised crime, Greater London 32w
Police Core and Ancillary Tasks Review 493–4w
Political refugees, Young people 494w
Prison population 478–82w, 498–503w
Prison population, Young offenders 484w
Prisoners, HIV infection 498w
Prisoners, Mental health services 491w
Prisoners, NHS trusts 492w
Prisoners, Private health services 491–2w
Remand in custody 175w
Road accidents, Death 492–3w
Sentencing, Appeals 35w
Speed limits, Cameras 484w
Witnesses, Majorca 495w
Young offenders, Sentencing 269w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Housing benefits, Scotland 624w
Income support, Scotland 622–3w
Non-domestic rates, Scotland 543–4w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Questions
Highlands and Islands Airports 299–300w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 37–8w
Public holidays, Scotland 545w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 547–8w

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade and Industry until 20 July*
Questions
Aerospace industry 325w
Cable systems 23w
Cellular phones 334w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick*—*continued
Dept of Trade and Industry, Information services 331w
Design Council 329w
Design Council, Finance 329–30w
Exhaust emission controls 335w
National Consumer Council, Finance 314–5
One stop shop initiative 179w
Patent Office 331w
Post Office, Privatisation 22w
Post Office, Profits 327w
Post Office Counters 326w
Post Office Users' National Council 326w
Post offices, Social security payments 327w
Postal services 327w
Small businesses, Finance 327w
STEP programme 178–9w
Sub post offices, Security 304–5
Telecommunications industry, Telephone services 180w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Scotland) Bill, 1R (20.07.94) 318
Questions
Giant hogweed, Scotland 56–7w
Handicapped, Dept of Employment 128w
Handicapped, Dept of National Heritage 103w
Handicapped, Dept of the Environment 309–10w
Handicapped, Dept of Trade and Industry 21w
Handicapped, Dept of Transport 96w, 247–8w
Handicapped, Northern Ireland Office 336w
Handicapped, Scottish Office 292w
Handicapped, Treasury 94w
Handicapped, Welsh Office 147w
Special education 140w

McNally, Gordon
3w, 64w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Questions
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 46w
Housing action trusts, Kingston upon Hull 468w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Employment discrimination 343w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 344–6w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Recruitment 344w

MacShane, Mr Denis
Debates etc.
Newspaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 438–9, 452
Questions
Iron and steel industry, Subsidies 315–6
Tax allowances, Public service vehicles 5w
Tax allowances, Public transport 5w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 34
Questions
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust, Public appointments 601–2w
Menwith Hill, Planning permission 393w
Pakistan, Immigration applications 514–5w

Maddock, Diana
Debates etc.
Forestry Commission (20.07.94) 505–8

Madel, Sir David
Questions
Lorries 69–70w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 79–80w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Northern Ireland Compensation Agency 338w

Magistrates' courts
Handicapped 407w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Breast cancer (20.07.94) 340–2
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 370–1

Maiden speeches
Liddell, Helen (18.07.94) 81–3

Maintenance
Children 615–8w

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 416, 419–21
Economic situation (18.07.94) 56
Questions
Chinook helicopters 381w
Gas supply industry, Europe 299–300
Non-governmental organisations, Finance 17
Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland, Performance standards 195–6w

***Major, Rt Hon John**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Beef, Import controls 175
Concessionary television licences 174
Debts, Developing countries 96–7w
Directors, Pay 2w
Economic situation 172
Electricity supply industry, Pay 553w
European Commission 174
European Council 97–8w
Exservicemen 550–1w
Group of Seven, Conferences 2w
Handicapped, Dept of Transport 96w
House of Commons questions 3w
Industrial relations law 176
Lloyd's of London, Ministers 551–2w
Lockerbie, Bombings 97w
McNally, Gordon 3w
Ministerial policy advisors, Prime Minister 552–3w
Ministers' visits abroad 97w
National service, Medals 550w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 174
Nuclear non proliferation 2w
Official engagements 97w
Parliamentary recess 174–5
Railtrack, Pay 96w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 173
Small businesses, Prime Minister 549w
Ulster Defence Association 551w
Unemployment, Macclesfield 173
VAT 172–3, 176
War widows 549–50w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 175–6

Majorca
Witnesses 495w

Malaysia
30w
Criminal investigation 229–30w
Foreign relations 132w

Mallinson, Eric
611–2w

Malone, Paul
Miscarriages of justice 494w

Malvern Hills Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R* (19.07.94) 159

Management consultants
NHS trusts 8w, 124–6w, 196w

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Questions
Royal yacht 169

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 34
Questions
Belize, Road construction 477w
Belize, Roads 516w
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 450w
Natural Resources Institute, Performance standards 477–8w
Safety belts, Minibuses 81–2w
West coast railway line 67w

Manufactured exports
313–4

Manufactured goods
439w
Balance of trade 3w, 328w

Manufacturing industries
525–6w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Gibraltar, Euopean Parliament Members 30–1w
RMS St Helena 476w
St Helena, Immigration control 30w

Marine Pollution Control Unit
Manpower 419–20w

Marine Safety Agency
Civil service manpower 75w
MV Braer Inquiry 74–5w
Performance standards 74w

Markets
Local authority powers 467w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 184
Questions
Severn bridge, Toll bridges 81w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 50
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 30
Questions
EC external relations 133w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Employment discrimination 226w
European Parliament members, Fringe benefits 565–6w
Immigration applications 154w
Rabbits, Pest control 348w
Wheat, Italy 347–8w

Marriage of convenience
Registration of births deaths and marriages 113w, 302w

Marsh Arabs
Oppression 372w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 407–9, 418, 420
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 32
Questions
Defence industries, Diversification 160
London Buses, Privatisation 71w
Post Office, Privatisation 308–9
Serious Fraud Office 13–4
Westminster City Council 467w

Marshall, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Burma, Political prisoners (21.07.94) 633

Martin, Mr David
Questions
Government departments, Empty housing 323w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 7w, 127w, 246w, 450w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
Defence procurement, European fighter aircraft 163

Mass media
Ownership 24w, (20.07.94) 357–8

Maternity services
11–2w
Hinchingbrooke Hospital (20.07.94) 394–406

Mawhinney, Rt Hon Brian, Minister for Health until 20 July. Thereafter Secretary of State for Transport
Questions
Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales 214w
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust, Legal costs 360w
Dental charges 367w
Dental services 12–4w
Dental services, Health hazards 213w
Deprivation indicators 358w
District health authorities, Labour costs 368w
Doctors' list of patients 208w
Doncaster Health Authority, Public appointments 16w
Environmental health officers 361w
Family doctors 220w
Family health services authorities, Appeals 17–8w
GP fundholders 19w, 219w
GP fundholders, Finance 359–60w, 369–70w
Health service staff, Early retirement 13w
Health service staff, Parental leave 366–7w
Health services 219w
Hospital consultants 366w
Hospital waiting lists 215w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS trusts 364w
Medical records 209w
Medical research 207–8w
Medical treatments, Patients' rights 365–6w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of Transport 416–7w
NHS complaints 210w
NHS trusts 218w
Optical charges exemptions 19w
Patient participation 366w
World Health Organisation 15w
World Health Organisation, Subsaharan Africa 15w

May Inquiry
see Guildford Four Inquiry

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Abortion, Northern Ireland 45w
Exservicemen, Ards 335w
Ministerial policy advisors, Northern Ireland Office 338–9w
Northern Ireland Compensation Agency 338w
Veterinary Sciences Division, Civil service agencies 342w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
Arms trade 335–6w
Arms trade, Iraq 538w
Capital gains tax 435–6w
Chichester, Giles 512w
Civil servants, Complaints 508–9w
Defence contracts, Mergers 562–3w
Dell, Reexports 519w
Ferranti, Company liquidations 180w
Ferranti, Fraud 394w, 447w
Investment trusts 435w
Kock, Stephen Adolph, Prosecutions 116w
Sexual harassment 508w
Wealth 437w

Medals
National service 550w

Medical Devices Agency
217w

Medical equipment
Asthma 363w
Recycling 367w

Medical examinations
Immigration applications 161w, 170w

Medical records
209w
Computer privacy 209–10w

Medical research
207–8w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 209w

Medical treatments
Fertility 363–4w, 600w
Patients' rights 365–6w

Members' correspondence
1w, 503w

Members' facilities
Bellamys Club Room 245w

Members' personal statements
Members' speeches (18.07.94) 35

Members' speeches
Members' personal statements (18.07.94) 35

Mental Health Act 1983
Questions
19w

Mental health community care
Per capita costs 362w
Scotland 124w

Mental health services
Prisoners 491w, 594–5w

Mental patients
Hospital beds 298w
Per capita costs 362w

Mentally disturbed offenders
Scotland 56w

Mentally ill
Home care services 604w
Northern Ireland 444w
Young people 444w

Menwith Hill
Planning permission 393w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Questions
Road finance 11–2

Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Pollution) Bill 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Mergers
Defence contracts 562–3w

Merseyside
Unemployment 396–7w

Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board
Electricity disconnections 530w

Merseyside Police
Electricity disconnections 495w

Metrication
Orders and regulations 182w

Michael, Mr Alun
Questions
NHS charges exemptions, Crime victims 607–8w
Road accidents, Death 492–3w
Social security benefits rules, Crime victims 618–9w

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Accident and emergency departments, Public petitions (19.07.94) 288
Questions
Dept of Trade and Industry, Billing 312

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 190

***Mickie, Mrs Ray**—continued*
Questions
Driving offences, Argyll and Bute 125w
Highlands and Islands Enterprise 293w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 70, 98–100
Questions
Dept of Employment, Expenditure 67w
Dept of Health, Civil servants 20w, 607w
District health authorities, Finance 11w
Extra contractual referrals 604w
Extra contractual referrals, Expenditure 20w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 444–6w
Health service staff, Wales 591–2w
Ministerial policy advisors, Attorney General 394w
Ministerial policy advisors, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 253w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept for Education 299–300w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Employment 227w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Health 362–3w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of National Heritage 246–7w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Social Security 259–60w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of the Environment 313w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Trade and Industry 538w
Ministerial policy advisors, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 234w
Ministerial policy advisors, Home Office 276–7w
Ministerial policy advisors, Lord Chancellor's Dept 224w
Ministerial policy advisors, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 349w
Ministerial policy advisors, Ministry of Defence 384–5w
Ministerial policy advisors, Northern Ireland Office 338–9w
Ministerial policy advisors, Prime Minister 552–3w
Ministerial policy advisors, Scottish Office 293–4w
Ministerial policy advisors, Treasury 268w
NHS trusts, Management consultants 8w, 124–6w, 196w
Vacancies, Employment Service local offices 128w

Military aid to civil community
563w

Military aircraft
Air accidents 557w
Defence procurement 114w
Low flying 374w

Military bands
375w
Armed forces training 375w, 389–90w
Deal Barracks 375–6w, 389–90w
Educational qualifications 388w

Milk
Agricultural marketing 184w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States, Visas 29w
Immigration rules, Foreign investment in UK 175w
Russia, Immigration applications 172w
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 169–70

Minches
Tanker ships 73w

Mines
114–5w, 563w
Arms trade 62w

Minibuses
Road safety (21.07.94) 564–73

***Minibuses**—continued*
Safety belts 81–2w, 247w

MINIS
Dept of the Environment 42w

Ministerial policy advisors
Attorney General 394w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 253w
Dept for Education 299–300w
Dept of Employment 227w
Dept of Health 362–3w
Dept of National Heritage 246–7w
Dept of Social Security 259–60w
Dept of the Environment 313w
Dept of Trade and Industry 538w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 234w
Foster, Christopher 249w
Home Office 276–7w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 224w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 349w
Ministry of Defence 384–5w
Northern Ireland Office 338–9w
Political parties 506w
Prime Minister 552–3w
Scottish Office 293–4w
Treasury 268w

Ministerial speeches
Ministry of Defence 562w

Ministerial statements
Africa 130w
Forestry (19.07.94) 177–91
Forestry Commission (19.07.94) 177–91
Homelessness (18.07.94) 21–35

Ministers
Lloyd's of London 551–2w
Rwanda 511w

Ministers' visits abroad
97w, 619w
Belize 114w
Dept for Education 579w
Dept of Health 603w
Dept of National Heritage 448–9w
Dept of the Environment 468w
Dept of Transport 416–7w
Home Office 496w
Ministry of Defence 565w
Treasury 434w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
Ministerial policy advisors 349w
Performance standards 356w

Ministry of Defence
Fraud 114w
Green papers 384w
Ministerial policy advisors 384–5w
Ministerial speeches 562w
Ministers' visits abroad 565w
Non-departmental public bodies 565w
Official cars 61w
Parliamentary questions 384w
Recruitment 61w
Small businesses 376w

Ministry of Defence Police
Pendine 387w

Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry
64w

Mink
Farms 347w

Minx programme
561w

Miscarriages of justice
34–5w
Malone, Paul 494w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Bank of England 429w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus 144w
Bus fares, Price increases 417w
Coffee, Prices 440–1w
EC external trade 266w
Economic growth, Interest rates 440w

***Mitchell, Mr Austin**—continued*
Exchange rates 4w, 431–3w
Exchange rates, Inflation 266w
Financial institutions, Average earnings 430w
Higher civil servants 507w
Imports 430w
Industrial production 332w, 434w, 438w, 524–6w
Industrial production, Labour costs 526–7w
Inflation 436–7w
Manufactured goods 439w
Manufacturing industries 525–6w
Money supply 266–7w
Prices 439w
Processed food, Prices 438w
Rents 438w
Retail price index 429–30w
Shareholders 440w
Trade competitiveness 433w
UK trade with EC 430–1w
Wealth 437w

Moate, Sir Roger
Questions
Extradition, USA 175w

Mobility of disabled
Taxis 248w

Money supply
266–7w

Monopolies References (Alterations of Exclusions) Order 1994
Questions
184w

***Monro, Sir Hector**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Debates etc.
Forestry Commission (20.07.94) 496, 501, 503, 508–11
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Scotland 123–4w
Agricultural workers, Pay 543–4w
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 297–8w
Forestry, Scotland 541–2w
Forestry Commission 542w
Giant hogweed, Scotland 56–7w
Radiation hazards, Forest fires 59w
Salmonella, Scotland 295w
Scottish Natural Heritage, Conflict of interests 58w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 547–8w
Tree planting, Scotland 542w
Water charges, Scotland 540w
Water companies, Scotland 540w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
EC transport policy 68w
Social Security Benefits Agency 259w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 244, 246–7, 249, 252–4
Welsh Development Agency (20.07.94) 366
Questions
Beaches, Water pollution 311w
Broadcasting Council for Wales, Codes of practice 447w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Government grants 585–6w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Land ownership and tenure 585w
Confederation of British Industry Wales 584w
Dentists, Wales 583w
Development Board for Rural Wales 584w
Fraud, South Wales 495w
Freshwater fishing, Wales 586w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 52–4w
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust, Community health services 585w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri*—*continued
Mentally ill, Home care services 604w
Ministerial policy advisors, Political parties 506w
National vocational qualifications 404w
NHS trusts, Wales 584–5w
Prosecutions, Publicity 447w
Secondary education, Curriculum 574w
Secondary education, Wales 584w
Training and enterprise councils, Wales 586w
Wales Tourist Board, Government grants 585w
Welsh Development Agency, Accounting 243w, 581–2w
Welsh Development Agency, Land acquisition 582–3w
Welsh Health Staff College 243w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Blood sports, Public petitions (21.07.94) 554
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 243, 259–60
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 212–3
Questions
Animal experiments, Toxicology 497w
Arctic fox, Farms 347w
Birds of prey, Theft 48–9w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Disease control 348w
Farm Animal Welfare Council, Expenditure 48w
Forestry, Scotland 541w
House of Commons catering, Veal 246w
Mink, Farms 347w
Pigs 141w
Sheep 141w
Zoos, Licensing 41–2w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1993/94 (20.07.94) 326–9
Recess motions (20.07.94) 363
Questions
British Paralympic Association 448w
Handicap benefits, Social security benefits rates 630–2w
Handicapped drivers, Parking offences 414–5w
Wheelchairs 602w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 30
Questions
Road safety education 138w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Serious Fraud Office 13

Mossley Hill Hospital
Homeopathy 20w, 216–7w

Motor vehicle theft
Crime prevention 496w

Motorways
3–4
Noise control 3
Road accidents 248w
Road safety 247w, 418w
Road tolls 3–4
Road traffic 72w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
British Library, Kennedy and Donkin 102w
National lottery, Camelot Group 101w

Mozambique
RENAMO 236–7w

Mudie, Mr George
Questions
Armed forces training 60w
Arms trade, Saudi Arabia 393w
Defence contracts 61w
Official gifts 60–2w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Newspaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 430, 439–42
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 369–71
Questions
Identity cards 33–4w
McGhee, Charles 31–2w
Miscarriages of justice 34–5w
Nuclear weapons, Expenditure 565w
Social security abuse, Identity cards 201w

Multiple births
Scotland 57–8w

Multiple occupation
Fires 496w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 246w

Museums and Galleries Commission
Objects in lieu of tax 247w

MV Braer Inquiry
Marine Safety Agency 74–5w

Nadir, Asil
Bankruptcy 334w
Extradition 132w

National Association of Victims' Support Schemes
178w

National Consumer Council
Finance 314–5

National Finance
see Treasury

"National Health Service News"
211w

National insurance
Computer privacy 50w, 547–8w

National insurance contributions
Pensions 265w

National lottery
Camelot Group 101w

National Lottery Charities Board
269–70w

National Museum of Science and Industry
see Science Museum

National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949
Questions
458w

National service
Medals 550w

National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers
Industrial disputes 4–7, 79–80w, 86w, 174, 417w, 421–2w

National vocational qualifications
227–8w, 404w

National Weights and Measures Laboratory
533w

NATO
Defence expenditure 382–3w
Peace keeping operations 116w

Natural Resources Institute
Performance standards 477–8w

Naturalisation
British citizenship 159–60w

Nature conservation
Elephants 316w, 466w
Government grants 39–40w
Hedges and ditches 470w
Rhinoceros 466w
Tigers 30w

Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation
380w
Performance standards 380w

Naval bases
Portland 391–2w

Naval Support Command
Manpower 391–2w

Navy
Armed forces women 378w
Defence procurement 171, 382w

Navy Army and Air Force Institutes
554w

Nazi war crimes
Prosecutions 14–6

Needham, Rt Hon Richard*, *Minister for Trade
Questions
Arms trade 335–6w
Arms trade, Iraq 538w
Coal Authority, Public appointments 333w
Dell, Reexports 519w
Dual use goods and technologies, EC action 535w
Export credit guarantees 330w
Export credit guarantees, Costs 330–1w
Export credit guarantees, Iraq 521–2w
Export credit guarantees, Jordan 22w, 330w
Export credit guarantees, South America 331w
Export Market Information Centre 183w
Foreign investment in UK 306
Foreign investment in UK, Car industry 305–6
Industrial production 332w
Manufactured exports 313–4
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 328w
Manufacturing industries 525–6w
Overseas trade, South America 331w
Trade competitiveness 328w
Trade promotion, China 327–8w
UK companies abroad, South America 529w

Nelson, Mr Anthony*, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State (Economic Secretary) to the Treasury
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 3w
Bank of England 429w
Business, Profits 437w
Capital, Companies 438–9w
Coffee, Prices 440–1w
Debts, Developing countries 5w
Economic growth, Interest rates 440w
Exchange rates 4w, 431–3w
Financial institutions, Average earnings 430w
Financial services 4w
Financial services, Fees and charges 5w
Imports 430w
Industrial production 434w, 438w
Inflation 436–7w
Investment income 434–5w
Investor protection 4w
Manufactured goods 439w
Personal income, Yorkshire and Humberside 93w
Personal Investment Authority 3–4w
Prices 439w
Processed food, Prices 438w
Rents 438w
Retail price index 429–30w
Shareholders 440w
Small businesses, Treasury 6w
Surveys, Treasury 3w
Tourism 3w, 24w
UK trade with EC 431w
Wealth 437w

Network SouthEast
Performance standards 4–5
Railway stations 88w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Oldchurch Hospital, Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 151–4

***Neubert, Sir Michael**—continued*
Questions
Church of England, Official residences 25w
Museums and Galleries Commission, Objects in lieu of tax 247w
Royal yacht, Decommissioning 372w

Newspaper press
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 427–52
Prices (20.07.94) 427–52

Newsprint
Recycling 471w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 369–93
Recess motions (20.07.94) 362–4
Questions
Cannabis 566w
Conservative Party, Companies political contributions 8w
Early day motions 566–7w
European Parliament members, Fringe benefits 565–6w
House of Commons questions, Costs 91w
Queen's speech 7w
Small businesses, Lord President of the Council 237w

Newtownabbey
Intimidation 441w

NHS
Armed forces 593w
Capital investment 210w
Energy consumption 595–6w
Energy costs 595w
Information services 603w
Land acquisition 291–2w
Paper 367w
Scotland 291–2w
Theft 14w

NHS and private practice
602w
NHS trusts 15–6w

NHS charges exemptions
Crime victims 607–8w

NHS complaints
210w

NHS finance
19w

NHS internal market
Codes of practice 599w

"NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin"
Scotland 541w

NHS Pensions Agency
217–8w

NHS trusts
218w
Hospital waiting lists 364w
Management consultants 8w, 124–6w, 196w
NHS and private practice 15–6w
Northern Ireland 196w
Prisoners 492w
Scotland 124–6w
Wales 8w, 584–5w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 201–2, 209–11, 223–6, 228, 231

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 187
Questions
Channel Five, Radio frequencies 447–8w
Defence expenditure 383w
Government grants to local authorities 107w

***Nicholson, Mr David**—continued*
"Health of the Nation White Paper" 605–6w
"Health of the Nation White Paper", Costs 603–4w
Local government services, Contracts for services 108–10w
NATO, Defence expenditure 382–3w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Iraq (20.07.94) 543–4
Iraq, Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 542–4

Nigeria
Democracy 478w
Foreign relations 511w

Nitric acid
Imports 458–9w, 522w
Industrial health and safety 522w

Nitrous oxide
Construction materials 473w

Noise control
Motorways 3

Non-departmental public bodies
Annual reports 583w
Ministry of Defence 565w
Welsh Office 583w

Non-domestic rates
Local government revenue 455w
Non-payment 455w
Scotland 543–4w

Non-fossil fuel obligation
Regional electricity companies 333–4w

Non-governmental organisations
Finance 16–7

Non-teaching staff
Training 576–8w

***Norris, Mr Steve**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport*
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (21.07.94) 609–12
Minibuses, Road safety (21.07.94) 568–73
Questions
A36, Road works 417–8w
Airports, South East region 69w, 414w
Barges, Hall Sands 415w
Barges, South Hams 423w
Civil servants, Performance appraisal 68–70w, 83–4w
Coastguard Agency, Operating costs 419w
Coastguard Agency, Performance standards 74w, 251w
Dept of Transport, Contracts for services 84w
Dept of Transport, Crimes of violence 77w
Dept of Transport, Efficiency scrutinies 85w, 87w
Dept of Transport, Sick leave 78w
EC transport policy 68w
Environment protection 425w
Gatwick Airport, Construction 69w
Handicapped drivers, Parking offences 414–5w
HM Coastguard, Civil service manpower 76w
London Buses, Privatisation 71w
London Transport, Capital investment 422w
London Underground, South London 1–3
Lorries, Greater London 415w
Marine Pollution Control Unit, Manpower 419–20w
Marine Safety Agency, Civil service manpower 75w
Marine Safety Agency, MV Braer Inquiry 74–5w
Motorways, Road safety 418w
Public Safety Zone Policy Review 413–4w
RAF Northolt, Air transport 414w
Road construction, House purchase 418w
Road traffic, Greater London 8–10
Road transport, South London 2–3

***Norris, Mr Steve**—continued*
Road works, Telephone services 423–5w
Small businesses, Dept of Transport 88–9w
Tanker ships, Minches 73w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air freight transport 74w
Tunnels, Woolwich 91w
Underground railways, Railway safety 415w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Deregulation initiative 425w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
Doctors' list of patients 360–1w

North Korea
Nuclear non proliferation 132–3w
South Korea 514w

North Tyneside
Government assistance 317–8w

North Yorkshire
Educational finance (20.07.94) 355–7

Northern General Hospital Sheffield
Children's hospitals (19.07.94) 288
Hospital closures (19.07.94) 288

Northern Ireland
Abortion 45w
Agricultural workers 443w
Armed forces civilians 377w
Child care 191–2w, 336–7w
Computer privacy 189w
Council house sales 339w
Deregulation initiative 341w
Driving offences 193w
Drug crimes 46w
Employment discrimination 46w
Environment protection 341w
Equal opportunities 192w
Flags 44w
Further education colleges 335w
Geriatric patients 343–4w
Government assistance to industry 340–1w
Handicapped (19.07.94) 194
Health service staff 444–6w
Housing 442–3w
Housing policy 442w
Housing starts 339w
Hualon Corporation 333w
Industrial tribunals 45w
Mentally ill 444w
NHS trusts 196w
Nurses' training 193–4w
Public bodies 190w
Recycling 341–2w
Rented housing 443w
Rents 193w
Road accidents 194–5w
Sites of special scientific interest 341w
Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 45w
Water charges 337w
Water supply disconnections 338w
Water supply industry 337–8w
Wool 196–7w

Northern Ireland Compensation Agency
338w

Northern Ireland Dept of the Environment
Civil service agencies 443–4w

Northern Ireland Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency
Performance standards 196w

Northern Ireland Legal Aid Advisory Committee
see Legal Aid Advisory Committee

Northern Ireland Office
Deregulation initiative 341w
Government contracts 347w
Handicapped 336w
Ministerial policy advisors 338–9w
Small businesses 191w

Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency
Performance standards 195w

Northern Ireland Valuation and Lands Agency
Performance standards 444w

Northern region
War pensions 621w

Northern Regional Health Authority
Durham University 602–3w

Nuclear Electric
180w

Nuclear non proliferation
2w, 114w
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament 381–2w
North Korea 132–3w

Nuclear physics
Postgraduate students 137–8w

Nuclear weapons
171
Expenditure 565w

Nuclear weapons tests
170–1
China 131–2w
Christmas Island 115–6w
Exservicemen 564–5w
War pensions 565w

Nursery schools
Educational finance 292–3w
Scotland 292–3w

Nurses
211w

Nurses' training
215–6w
Expenditure 240w
Northern Ireland 193–4w
Scotland 298w, 548w
Student numbers 360w
Teachers 193–4w, 215w
Wales 240–1w

Nutrition and health
142w, 144–6w
Children 142–3w
Family income 371w

Objects in lieu of tax
Museums and Galleries Commission 247w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 107–10
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 16
China, Nuclear weapons tests 131–2w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 152w
Haiti, Democracy 131w
Haiti, Sanctions 131w
Identity cards 289w
North Korea, Nuclear non proliferation 132–3w
Street patrols 270w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 201, 211
Questions
Nuclear weapons tests 171
Nuclear weapons tests, Christmas Island 115–6w
Water charges, Northern Ireland 337w
Water supply industry, Private investment 337–8w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 338w

Occupational health
Ireland 338w

Occupational pensions
Railway workers (18.07.94) 128–49

Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority
201–2w

Occupied territories
Israel 232–3w
Students 232–3w

Offal
46w

Office of Electricity Regulation
Finance 531–2w

Office of Passenger Rail Franchising
Expenditure 415–6w

Offices
Procurement Executive 391w

Official cars
Ministry of Defence 61w

Official engagements
97w

Official gifts
60–2w

Official residences
Armed forces 62–4w, 559–62w
Bermuda 514w
Church of England 25w
Hong Kong 514w

Official secrets
Health service staff 365–6w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 418–20
Questions
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 149–52w, 205w
Health services, Crime victims 219w
Small businesses, Finance 327w

Oldchurch Hospital
Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 151–8

Older workers
Unemployment 65w

One stop shop initiative
179w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 332w
Coal Authority, Public appointments 333w
Gas supply industry 300–1
Gas supply industry, Competition 21–2w

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 61–3, 123

Open government
Disclosure of information 319w

Opencast mining
Planning permission 523w
Privatisation 524w
Staffordshire 524w

***Oppenheim, Mr Phillip**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment from 20 July*
Questions
Trade competitiveness 307

"Opportunity 2000 the Challenge in General Practice"
212w

Opposition days
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 200–38

Oppression
Marsh Arabs 372w

Optical charges exemptions
19w
Scotland 541w

Orders and regulations
Metrication 182w

Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland
Performance standards 195–6w

Organ donors
220–2w

Organised crime
Greater London 32w

Orsett Hospital
Accident and emergency departments (19.07.94) 287–8
Public petitions (19.07.94) 287–8

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 57, 96–8
UN Conference on Population and Development (20.07.94) 545–8
Questions
UN Conference on Population and Development 17–8

Otterburn
Armed forces training 378w

Out of school child care grant scheme
Wales 147w

Out-patient clinics
Burnley Health Care NHS Trust 599w

Out-patients
Surgery 600w

Oval cricket ground
(20.07.94) 331–4

Overseas aid
11w, 20
Children 225w
Defence expenditure 11w
East Africa 8w, 477w
Family planning 98–9w, 224–5w
Palestinians 9w
Politics and government 8w
Rwanda 10w, 173, 474–6w
Somalia 100w, 475w
Zaire 473–4w

Overseas Development
see Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Overseas trade
Kuwait 232w
South America 331w

Overseas workers
Immigration rules 35w

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee 154w
Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 153–4w
Defence contracts, Shipbuilding 384w
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation 380w
Trade associations 325w

***Paice, Mr James**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment from 20 July*
Questions
Beef, Import controls 175

Pakistan
Immigration applications 161–2w, 514–5w

Palace of Westminster
Day care of children 7w
Lighting 126w

Palestinians
Overseas aid 9w

Paper
NHS 367w

Parental contributions
Assisted places scheme (19.07.94) 262–79

Parental leave
Health service staff 366–7w

Parent's Charter
139w

Parish councils
315w

Parking offences
Handicapped drivers 414–5w

Parliamentary constituencies
Unemployment 395w

Parliamentary privilege
(20.07.94) 369–93

Parliamentary questions
Costs 527–8w

Parliamentary questions—continued
Home Office 488w
Ministry of Defence 384w

Parliamentary recess
174–5

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Drug abuse, Liverpool 498w
Electricity disconnections 530w
Inland Revenue, Liverpool 437w
Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board, Electricity disconnections 530w
Merseyside Police, Electricity disconnections 495w
Nigeria, Foreign relations 511w
North Korea, South Korea 514w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Finance 531–2w
Public utilities, Powers of entry 531w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 474–6w
Unemployment, Liverpool 396w
Unemployment, Merseyside 396–7w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 395w

Partnership for peace
116w

Passenger's Charter
Compensation 85w
Railway timetables 89w

Passports
Diplomatic service 134–5w

Patent Office
331w

Patient participation
366w

Patients
Dentists 607w

Patients' rights
Medical treatments 365–6w

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Road construction, Compulsory purchase (20.07.94) 324–6
Questions
Motorways, Road traffic 72w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
Early day motions 566–7w

Pay incentives
Prison Service Agency 493w

PAYE
Building industry 95–6w

Peace keeping operations
Armed forces deployment 512w
NATO 116w
Publications 556w
Rwanda 26w, 474w
United Nations 169–70

Peace negotiations
Sudan 25w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 228–30

Peat
Extractive industries 469w

Pedestrian crossings
Road accidents 118–20w

Pedestrians
Road accidents 84–5w

Pendine
Defence research establishments 149w, 373–4w, 386–7w
Ministry of Defence Police 387w

Pension funds
Belling 628w
British Coal Corporation 536–7w

Pension Law Review Committee
258w

Pensioners
Concessionary television licences 101–2w
Personal income 202–6w

Pensions
National insurance contributions 265w

Performance appraisal
Civil servants 68–70w, 83–4w
Dept of Transport 68–70w, 83–4w

"Permanent Secretary's Handbook"
126w

Personal equity plans
Tax allowances 95w

Personal income
612–4w, 632–4w
Pensioners 202–6w
Surveys 633–4w
Yorkshire and Humberside 93w

Personal injury compensation
Computer privacy 189w
Court rules and procedures 406–7w
Social security benefits overpayment 608–9w

Personal Investment Authority
3–4w

Personal pensions
Investor protection (20.07.94) 348–50

Personal tax allowances
Elderly 93w

Pest control
Rabbits 348w
Wild geese 467w

Pesticides
(18.07.94) 150

Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Crops Food and Feeding Stuffs) Regulations 1994
Debates etc.
(18.07.94) 150

Pickles, Mr Eric
Questions
Labour force survey 401–3w

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Questions
Diabetic Care Joint Task Force 20w
Mossley Hill Hospital, Homeopathy 20w
Social security benefits, Political refugees 53–4w

Pigs
141w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Questions
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 599w
Belling, Pension funds 628w
Bouncers 494w
Building industry 466w
Burnley Health Care NHS Trust, Out-patient clinics 599w
Bus services, Competition 70w
Council tax, Valuation 462–3w
Debts, Developing countries 96–7w
First time buyers 464w
Hospital waiting lists 600w
House renovation grants 465w
Housing, Community care 462w
Housing association grant 459w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 624w
Housing construction 303w
Housing Corporation, Housing construction 460w
Mobility of disabled, Taxis 248w
Motorways, Road accidents 248w
Non-domestic rates, Local government revenue 455w
Public sector housing 459–60w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 460w
Rent allowances 629–30w
RESTART programme, Social security benefits reductions 622w
School leaving 140–1w

Pike, Mr Peter L—continued
Single regeneration budget 460–2w
Single regeneration budget, Index of urban deprivation 461w
Slum clearance 459w
Surgery 599–600w
Surgery, Out-patients 600w
Water charges 462w

"Planning and the Historic Environment"
448w

Planning permission
464w
Building alterations 40w
Coal mining 319–20w, 469–70w
Greenbelt 463w
Hospitals 540w
Land pollution 457–8w
Menwith Hill 393w
Opencast mining 523w
Public inquiries 464–5w
Redhill Aerodrome 465w

Plumbing
Building regulations 113w

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Police Complaints Authority
Public appointments 38w

Police Core and Ancillary Tasks Review
493–4w

Policewomen
34w

Political parties
Burundi 511–2w
Ministerial policy advisors 506w

Political prisoners
Burma (21.07.94) 628–34

Political refugees
Entry clearances 163–6w, 174w
Immigration applications 37–8w, 173–4w, 275–6w
Social security benefits 53–4w
Young people 494w

Politics and government
Overseas aid 8w

Pollution
Consolidated Fund debates (20.07.94) 533–41
Derbyshire (20.07.94) 533–41

Pollution monitoring
Exhaust emissions 324–5w

Population
473w, (20.07.94) 545–52

Porter, Mr David
Questions
Litter, Environment protection 320w
Organ donors 220–2w
Skin, Transplant surgery 18w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Chief Secretary to the Treasury until 20 July. Thereafter Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 117–23
Questions
Civil service retirement, Costs 95w
Handicapped, Treasury 94w
Retail price index 7w
Public sector earnings 93w

Portland
Naval bases 391–2w

Porton Down
382w

Portsmouth
Special schools 573w

Post Office
326w
Privatisation 22w, 308–10

Post Office*—*continued
Profits 327w

Post Office Counters
326w
Administrative costs 312

Post Office Users' National Council
326w

Post offices
Rural areas 326w
Social security payments 327w

Postal services
327w
EC action (18.07.94) 150, 539w

Postgraduate students
Nuclear physics 137–8w

Poverty
Children 260w

Poverty trap
Social security recipients 199–200w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Palace of Westminster, Lighting 126w

Powers of entry
Electricity disconnections 495w
Public utilities 531w

Prentice, Mrs Bridget
Questions
Abortion, Scotland 54–6w
Exhaust emissions, Greater London 41w
Tuberculosis, Children 370–1w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Questions
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 101–2w
Directors, Pay 2w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 130w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 421–2w
Offal 46w
Public sector earnings 93w
Railtrack, Pay 96w

Pre-school education
Expenditure 138–9w, 237w
Local government expenditure 578w
Wales 237w

Prescriptions
592w

Preservation orders
Trees 450–2w

Price increases
Bus fares 417w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Debates etc.
Hinchingbrooke Hospital, Maternity services (20.07.94) 403, 406
Questions
Ambulance services, Exhaust emission controls 594w
Breast feeding 605w
Deprivation indicators 358w
Dept of Health, Information services 364w
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 127w
Family doctors 220w
Family doctors, Manpower 369w
Family health services authorities, Deprivation indicators 355–8w
GP fundholders 604–6w
GP fundholders, Finance 369–70w
Health authorities, Expenditure 593w
Health education, Publicity 595–6w
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 365–6w
Health service staff, Parental leave 366–7w
Health visitors, Scotland 122–3w
Healthcall 364–5w
Hospital consultants 366w
Hospital consultants, Greater London 365w
Hospitals, Tobacco 595w
Hospitals, Water pollution 594w
Medical equipment, Recycling 367w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn*—*continued
Medical treatments, Patients' rights 365–6w
NHS, Energy consumption 595–6w
NHS, Energy costs 595w
NHS, Paper 367w
NHS and private practice 602w
Optical charges exemptions 19w
Patient participation 366w
Poverty, Children 260w

Primary education
Class sizes 136w
School population 140w

Prime Minister
Ministerial policy advisors 552–3w
Small businesses 549w

Prison accommodation
175–6w, 283w
Scotland 548–50w

Prison administration
176w

Prison population
281–3w, 286–9w, 478–82w, 498–503w
Age 283w
Ethnic minorities 278–82w
Fine defaulters 286w
Young offenders 484w

Prison rules
Scotland 120–1w

Prison Service Agency
Pay incentives 493w
Publications 32–3w

Prison staff
Manpower 290w

Prisoners
281w
Drug abuse 286w
HIV infection 498w
Housing benefits 260w
Languages 294w
Lorry drivers 234w
Mental health services 491w, 594–5w
NHS trusts 492w
Per capita costs 278w
Private health services 491–2w
Scotland 294w
Suicide 283–4w

Prisoners of war
Kuwait (20.07.94) 358–9

Prisoners on remand
501–2w

Prisons
285–6w

Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 1994
Questions
120–1w

Private detectives
Twyford Down 73w

Private Finance Panel
Government grants 426w

Private health services
Abortion 367–8w
Prisoners 491–2w

Private investment
Water supply industry 337–8w

Private Members' bills
Home Office 486–7w

Private rented housing
Housing benefits 624w
Tenant harassment 312w

Private sector
Defence contracts 165–6

Privatisation
British Coal Corporation 332w, 522–3w, 536–7w
British Rail 67w, 415–6w
Coal mining 329w
Coal products 523w
European Passenger Services 250–1w

Privatisation*—*continued
Hyload 523w
London Buses 71w
Opencast mining 524w
Post Office 22w, 308–10
Transport Research Laboratory 250w
Water supply industry 175–6, 338w

Privileges Select Committee
(19.07.94) 287, (20.07.94) 369–93

Probate
Welsh language 1w

Processed food
Prices 438w

Procurement Executive
Offices 391w

Project 2000
Expenditure 241–2w
Scotland 299w
Wales 241–2w

Project Al Yamamah
384w

Property law
(19.07.94) 280

Property Services Agency
Shares 469w

Property transfer
Armed forces housing 555–6w
County Hall 306–7w
Defence land 555–6w
Higher education colleges 244w
Horbury Convent 244w

Prosecutions
Exhaust emissions 490w
Kock, Stephen Adolph 116w
Nazi war crimes 14–6
Publicity 447w

Prostitution
(19.07.94) 289–96

Psychology
Manpower 220w

Public appointments
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust 601–2w
Coal Authority 333w
Cook, David 192w
Cook, Fionnula 192w
Doncaster Health Authority 16w
London Transport 82w
Police Complaints Authority 38w

Public bills
Home Office 486–7w

Public bodies
Chartermark scheme 297w
Consultants 547w
Northern Ireland 190w

Public expenditure
Child care 117–8w, 146w, 191–2w, 208w, 214w, 292w, 336–7w

Public holidays
Scotland 545w

Public houses
Landlord and tenant (20.07.94) 331–4

Public inquiries
Planning permission 464–5w

Public petitions
Accident and emergency departments (19.07.94) 288
Blood sports (21.07.94) 554
Driving offences (21.07.94) 553
Orsett Hospial (19.07.94) 287–8
VAT (21.07.94) 554

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
Civil service agencies 195w

Public records
81w

Public Safety Zone Policy Review
413–4w

Retail price index
7w

Public sector earnings
93w

Public sector housing
312w, 459–60w
Ethnic minorities 545w
Homelessness (18.07.94) 21–35
Housing construction 460w
Scotland 545w

Public service obligation grant
British Rail 86w

Public service vehicles
Tax allowances 5w

Public transport
Finance 11–2
South East region 69w
Tax allowances 5w

Public utilities
Powers of entry 531w

Publications
Child Support Agency 49–50w
Peace keeping operations 556w
Prison Service Agency 32–3w

Publicity
Health education 595–6w
Prosecutions 447w
Scottish Office 539w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Questions
Billing, Government departments 313

Queen's speech
7w

Rabbits
Pest control 348w

Race equality councils
277–8w

Race Relations Employment Advisory Service
227w
Contracts for services 64w

Radar
Defence contracts 379w

Radiation hazards
Forest fires 59w

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Surveys, Treasury 3w

Radio frequencies
Channel Five 447–8w

Radioactive wastes
Defence land 556w
Scotland 59w

RAE Farnborough
393w

RAF Northolt
Air transport 414w

RAF Stanmore Park
166

Railtrack
423w
Coopers and Lybrand 249w
External financing limits 86w
Pay 96w, 249–50w

Railway accidents
Hartlepool power station 90w
Transport of radioactive materials 90w

Railway fares
421w

Railway freight transport
70w
Coal 523w
Selby 523w

Railway network
Barking 72w, 82–3w
Bridges 85w

Railway network*—*continued
Channel tunnel 72w, 82–3w, (20.07.94) 350–3, 414w, (21.07.94) 605–12
Investment 86–7w, 420w
West Yorkshire 72w
Woolwich 91w

Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(18.07.94) 128–49

Railway safety
Underground railways 415w

Railway stations
Aids for handicapped 423w
Network SouthEast 88w

Railway timetables
Passenger's Charter 89w

Railway travel
Essex 70w
South West region 76w

Railway workers
Occupational pensions (18.07.94) 128–49

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 39, 41

Rate Collection Agency
see Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Air pollution, Greater London (20.07.94) 521–6, 528
Questions
Road traffic, Greater London 10

Recess motions
(20.07.94) 324–67

Recruitment
Ministry of Defence 61w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 344w
Territorial Army 558w

Recycling
Medical equipment 367w
Newsprint 471w
Northern Ireland 341–2w

Redhill Aerodrome
Planning permission 465w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
"Code of Conduct Code of Accountability" 212w
Cornwall Healthcare NHS Trust, Legal costs 360w
Doncaster Health Authority, Public appointments 16w
Exservicemen 164
Fraud, Isle of Man 179w
Health service staff, Wales 591w
Legal aid 408w
"National Health Service News" 211w
Nurses 211w
Nurses' training, Student numbers 360w
"Opportunity 2000 the Challenge in General Practice" 212w
Passenger's Charter, Railway timetables 89w
"Women Managers in the NHS" 211–2w

Reduced earnings allowance
618w

Redundancy
Armed forces 376w, 563w
Royal Naval Engineering College 558w

Redwood, Rt Hon John*, *Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 583–4w
Arable area payments scheme, Wales 239–40w
CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments, Contracts for services 586w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Government grants 585–6w

Redwood, Rt Hon John*—*continued
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Land ownership and tenure 585w
Cereals, Wales 239w
Confederation of British Industry Wales 584w
Defence research establishments, Pendine 149w
Dentists, Wales 583w
Development Board for Rural Wales 584w
Floods, Llandudno 238w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 580–1w
Freshwater fishing, Wales 586w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 148–50w
Gwynedd, Rheumatology 238w
Housing, Wales 238w
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust, Community health services 585w
NHS trusts, Wales 584–5w
"Roads in Wales: 1994 Review" 243–4w
Secondary education, Wales 584w
Student accommodation, Wales 239w
Training and enterprise councils, Wales 586w
University of Wales, Student numbers 240w
Wales Tourist Board, Government grants 585w
Welsh Consumer Council 581w
Welsh Development Agency, Accounting 243w, 581–2w
Welsh Development Agency, Industrial estates 146w
Welsh Development Agency, Land acquisition 582–3w
Welsh Economic Council 8w
Welsh Health Staff College 243w
Welsh Office, Non-departmental public bodies 583w
Welsh Office, Operating Costs 579–80w

Reexports
Dell 519w

Refugees
East Africa 476–7w
Rwanda 473–4w
Somalia 475–6w
Sudan 100w
Zaire 475–6w

Refuges
Water charges 205w

Regional challenge
537–8w

Regional development agencies
298–9
Foreign investment in UK 297–8

Regional electricity companies
Non-fossil fuel obligation 333–4w

Regional health authorities
Labour costs 368w

Regional selective assistance
23–4w, 313, 334w

Registration of births deaths and marriages
Marriage of convenience 113w, 302w

Relocation of employees
Deal Barracks 389w

Remand in custody
175w

RENAMO
Mozambique 236–7w

Rendel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 26
Questions
Council tax 313–4w
Council tax, Tax collection 314w
Council tax, Valuation 313–4w
Council tax capping 107w
Local government finance 107w
Parish councils 315w

Rent allowances
629–30w

Rent rebates
206w

Rented housing
Northern Ireland 443w

Rents
438w, 472w
Northern Ireland 193w

Repatriation
Vietnamese refugees 130w

Republic of Ireland
Habitual residence test 620w
Wool [illegible]–7w

Research councils
Agricultural and Food Research Council 349–50w

Resistencia Nacional Mocambica
see RENAMO

Restart programme
631–2w
Social security benefits reductions 622w

Retail price index
429–30w

"Review of Tree Preservation Policies and Legislation Consultation Paper"
450–2w

RFA Sir Bedivere
384w
Defence procurement 115w

Rheumatology
Gwynedd 238w

Rhinoceros
Africa 466–7w
Nature conservation 466w

***Richards, Mr Rod**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office from 20 July*
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 52
Questions
Cardiff Bay barrage, Fish conservation 244w
Employment Service Agency 228w
Higher education colleges, Property transfer 244w
"Roads in Wales: 1994 Review" 243–4w
Trade competitiveness 328w
Welsh Office, Performance standards 591w
Welsh Water Authority 244w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Questions
Challenger tanks 376w
Trade competitiveness 328w

***Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm**, Secretary of State for Defence*
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 113–4w
Armed forces 166–7
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 165
Defence contracts 162
Defence industries, Scotland 167
Defence procurement 163, 167
Defence procurement, European fighter aircraft 163
Defence procurement, Hercules aircraft 162
Front line initiative 163
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 168
Territorial Army, Army strength 167
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 169–70

Right to buy
Council housing 459–60w

Rio Declaration
377–8w

River Severn
Bridges 450w

RMS St Helena
476w

RNAD Trecwn
386w

RNAS Culdrose
Helicopters 392–3w

RNAS Portland
Closures 391w

RNSD Eaglescliffe
385–6w

Road accidents
Death 492–3w
Motorways 248w
Northern Ireland 194–5w
Pedestrian crossings 118–20w
Pedestrians 84–5w
Scotland 118–20w

Road construction
Belize 477w
Compulsory purchase (20.07.94) 324–6
Cost benefit analysis 73w
House purchase 418w
Sites of special scientific interest 458w
Yorkshire and Humberside 418w

Road finance
11–2

Road safety
Minibuses (21.07.94) 564–73
Motorways 247w, 418w
Wales 146w

Road safety barriers
71w

Road safety education
138w

Road signs
68w

Road tax
75w
Tax evasion 89w, 252–3w

Road tolls
Motorways 3–4

Road traffic
Environment protection 7–8
Exhaust emissions 10–1
Greater London 8–10
Motorways 72w
Transport policy (20.07.94) 353–5

Road transport
South London 2–3

Road works
A36 417–8w
A46 417–8w
A259 72–3w
M8 544–5w
Telephone services 423–5w

Roads
8
Belize 516w
Finance 12–3
Guatemala 516w

"Roads in Wales: 1994 Review"
243–4w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Questions
Armed forces 166–7
Cycling 71w
Cycling, Children 141w, 302–3w

***Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn**, Minister of State for Wales until 20 July*
Questions
Free school meals, Wales 241–2w
Higher education colleges, Property transfer 244w
Out of school child care grant scheme, Wales 147w
Pre-school education, Expenditure 237w
Road safety, Wales 146w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 179–81

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Questions
Medical Devices Agency 217w
NHS Pensions Agency 217–8w

Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 93–5
Questions
Foreign investment in UK 306

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 409–11
Questions
Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales 214w
Beaches, Water pollution 104w
Bellamys Club Room, Members' facilities 245w
Bellamys Club Room, Surveys 244–5w
Day care of children, Palace of Westminster 7w
Dental services 13w
Dentists, Patients 607w
Doctors' list of patients, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 360–1w
Exservicemen 163–4
Ministers' visits abroad 97w, 619w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept for Education 579w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of Health 603w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of National Heritage 448–9w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of the Environment 468w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of Transport 416–7w
Ministers' visits abroad, Home Office 496w
Ministers' visits abroad, Ministry of Defence 565w
Ministers' visits abroad, Treasury 434w
Multiple occupation, Fires 496w
Network SouthEast, Railway stations 88w
Sub post offices, Security 304–5
Underground railways, Railway safety 415w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 418, 421–3
Economic situation (18.07.94) 118

Rogers, Michael
512w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
UN Conference on Population and Development 18

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 187
Questions
Drug crimes, Northern Ireland 46w
Forestry, Scotland 542w
Occupational health, Ireland 338w
Public bodies, Northern Ireland 190w
Tree planting 353w
Tree planting, Scotland 542w
Wool, Republic of Ireland 196–7w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (21.07.94) 605
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 270–1
Government (21.07.94) 613–6
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 383–4
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 143

Rowe, Mr Andrew—continued
Questions
Gosport Borough Council, Contracts for services 324w
Non-governmental organisations, Finance 16

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
Social security benefits 198–200w

Royal Air Force
Defence contracts 165–6

Royal family
Taxation 268w

Royal Marine School of Music
561–2w
Listed buildings 561w

Royal Naval Engineering College
Armed forces civilians 558w
Redundancy 558w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Employment discrimination 343w
Manpower 344–6w
Recruitment 344w

Royal yacht
168–9
Decommissioning 372w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison 178w
County Hall, Property transfer 306–7w
Dental services, Deptford 601w
Members' correspondence 503w
National Association of Victims' Support Schemes 178w
Prison accommodation 283w
Prison population 281–3w, 286–9w, 498–503w
Prison population, Age 283w
Prison population, Ethnic minorities 278–82w
Prison population, Fine defaulters 286w
Prison staff, Manpower 290w
Prisoners 281w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 286w
Prisoners, Per capita costs 278w
Prisoners, Suicide 283–4w
Prisons 285–6w
Social security appeals 627w
Widowers' benefits, Equal opportunities 629w

Rugby
Income tax 91–2w

Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Questions
Consumer durables, Labelling 21w

Rural areas
Post offices 326w

Rural Housing Trust
309w

Rural planning
Horses 318–9w

Russia
Immigration applications 172w

Rwanda
Armed conflict 100–1w
Armed forces deployment 168, 233w, 511w
Departmental correspondence 474w
Ministers 511w
Overseas aid 10w, 173, 474–6w
Peace keeping operations 26w, 474w
Refugees 473–4w
UN Security Council 26w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Hinchingbrooke Hospital, Maternity services (20.07.94) 402–6
Oldchurch Hospital, Accident and emergency departments (18.07.94) 155–7

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
Questions
Abortion 603w
Abortion, Private health services 367–8w
Alternative medicine 216w
Alternative medicine, Animal products 607w
Alternative medicine, Complaints 216w
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 599w
Ambulance services, Exhaust emission controls 594w
Armed forces medical services, Hospital closures 596w
Asthma, Hospital admissions 363w
Asthma, Medical equipment 363w
Blood donors 605w
Bradford Community Health NHS Trust, Public appointments 601–2w
Breast cancer 16–7w
Breast feeding 605w
Burnley Health Care NHS Trust, Out-patient clinics 599w
Cancer, Health services 18–9w
Cancer, Skin disorders 15w
Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research 601w
"Code of Conduct Code of Accountability" 212w
Computers in National Health Service 594w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 209w, 358w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia, Medical research 209w
Death 596w
Dental services 594w
Dental services, Deptford 601w
Dentists, Patients 607w
Dept of Health, Civil servants 20w, 601w, 607w
Dept of Health, Information services 364w
Diabetic Care Joint Task Force 20w
District health authorities, Finance 11w
District health authorities, Legal costs 361w
Extra contractual referrals 604w
Extra contractual referrals, Expenditure 20w
Family health services authorities, Deprivation indicators 355–8w
Family health services authorities, Expenditure 212–4w
Fertility, Medical treatments 363–4w, 600w
Food poisoning 363w
GP fundholders 604–6w
Health authorities, Expenditure 593w
Health education, Inter agency cooperation 218w
Health education, Publicity 595–6w
"Health of the Nation White Paper" 605–6w
"Health of the Nation White Paper", Costs 603–4w
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 365–6w
Health service staff, Wales 591–2w
Health services 218–9w
Health services, Crime victims 219w
Health services, Expenditure 593w
Health services, Performance standards 597–8w
Healthcall 364–5w
HIV infection 362w
Hospital waiting lists 600w
Hospitals, Tobacco 595w
Hospitals, Water pollution 594w
Infant mortality 358–9w
Maternity services 11–2w
Medical Devices Agency 217w
Medical equipment, Recycling 367w
Medical records, Computer privacy 209–10w
Mental health services, Prisoners 594–5w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of Health 362–3w
Ministers' visits abroad, Dept of Health 603w
Mossley Hill Hospital, Homeopathy 20w, 216–7w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
"National Health Service News" 211w
NHS, Armed forces 593w
NHS, Capital investment 210w
NHS, Energy consumption 595–6w
NHS, Energy costs 595w
NHS, Information services 603w
NHS, Paper 367w
NHS, Theft 14w
NHS and private practice 602w
NHS charges exemptions, Crime victims 607–8w
NHS finance 19w
NHS internal market, Codes of practice 599w
NHS Pensions Agency 217–8w
NHS trusts, NHS and private practice 15–6w
Northern Regional Health Authority, Durham University 602–3w
Nurses 211w
Nurses' training 215–6w
Nurses' training, Student numbers 360w
Nurses' training, Teachers 215w
Nutrition and health 144–6w
"Opportunity 2000 the Challenge in General Practice" 212w
Organ donors 220–2w
Prescriptions 592w
Registration of births deaths and marriages, Marriage of convenience 113w, 302w
St Andrew's Hospital Billericay, Burns 19–20w
Skin, Transplant surgery 18w
Small businesses, Dept of Health 210–1w
Steroid drugs, Drug side effects 21w
Surgery 599–600w
Surgery, Out-patients 600w
Teenage pregnancy 606w
Tuberculosis, Children 370–1w
"Women Managers in the NHS" 211–2w

Safety belts
Minibuses 81–2w, 247w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Industry until 20 July
Questions
Aerospace industry 179w
EC Social Charter 326w
Ferranti, Company liquidations 180w
Foreign investment in UK, Government assistance 333w
Hualon Corporation, Government assistance 333w
Iron and steel industry 301, 328w
Iron and steel industry, Electricity tariffs 301
Iron and steel industry, Subsidies 315–6
Regional selective assistance 23–4w, 313, 334w
Trade competitiveness 310–1

Sale of Teesside International Airport Etc Bill 1993/94 (Proposed)
Debates etc.
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (20.07.94) 319–23

Salisbury Plain
Armed forces training 378w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 371–2, 382–3
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 204, 207, 214, 234
Questions
Defence industries, Scotland 167
Gas supply industry 300

Salmonella
363w
Scotland 295w

Sanctions
Haiti 131w

Saudi Arabia
Arms trade 393w

Schlesinger, Alexander
135–6w

School administration
579w

School admission
Grant maintained schools 571w
Secondary education 138w

School buildings
575w

School closures
302w
Administrative delays 137w
Special schools 301–2w

School leaving
140–1w
Take-up of employment 65–6w
Training 65–6w

School population
300–1w, 568–72w
Grant maintained schools 568–72w
Primary education 140w

Schools
Sutton Coldfield (21.07.94) 555–63

Science Museum
103w

Scientists
Agricultural and Food Research Council 254w
Institute of Food Research 254w

Scotland
Abortion 54–6w
Accidents 542–3w
Age addition 623w
Agricultural subsidies 123–4w
Agricultural workers 543–4w
Arable area payments scheme 297–8w
Cancer 56w, 291w
Carers 296w
Cemeteries 118w
Chartermark scheme 297w
Child care 117–8w, 292w
Children 59w
Computer privacy 547–8w
Consultants 547w
Council tax 117w, 545–6w
Defence industries 167
Deportation 276w
Driving offences 125w
Drug abuse 545w
East coast railway line 68w
Electricity interconnectors 58w
Environmentally sensitive areas 546–7w
Food poisoning 295w
Forestry 541–2w
Free school meals 296w
Giant hogweed 56–7w
Handicapped (20.07.94) 318
Health visitors 122–3w
Homelessness 294w
Hospital beds 298w
Hospitals 540w
Housing benefits 624w
Housing revenue accounts 542w
Income support 622–3w
Invalid care allowances 259w
Local government staff 546w
Mental health community care 124w
Mentally disturbed offenders 56w
Multiple births 57–8w
NHS 291–2w
"NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin" 541w
NHS trusts 124–6w
Non-domestic rates 543–4w
Nursery schools 292–3w
Nurses' training 298w, 548w
Optical charges exemptions 541w
Prison accommodation 548–50w
Prison rules 120–1w
Prisoners 294w
Project 2000 299w
Public holidays 545w
Public sector housing 545w
Radioactive wastes 59w
Road accidents 118–20w

Scotland*—*continued
Salmonella 295w
Sheep premiums 547–8w
Surgery 295w
Tree planting 542w
Water and sewerage companies 119–20w
Water charges 540w
Water companies 540w
Wheelchairs 124w, 294–5w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Social Security and Disabled People until 20 July
Questions
Compensation Recovery Unit 201w
Handicapped, Discrimination 53w, 263w
Industrial diseases benefits, Bronchitis 50w
Invalid care allowances, Scotland 259w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 52–4w
Social security benefits rules, Voluntary work 49w
Social security recipients, Training 49w

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
Annual reports 119w

Scottish Enterprise
296w

Scottish Homes
296–7w

Scottish Natural Heritage
Conflict of interests 58w

Scottish Office
Disclosure of information 623w
Environmental policy 541w
Handicapped 292w
Ministerial policy advisors 293–4w
Publicity 539w

Scottish Prison Service
Contracts for services 293w

Sea pollution
EC countries 311w
EC grants and loans 311–2w

Secondary education
Curriculum 574w
School admission 138w
Wales 584w

Security
Sub post offices 304–5

"Security Equality Choice - Future for Pensions White Paper"
53w

Security vetting
Armed forces civilians 376–7w

Selby
Railway freight transport 523w

Self-regulating organisations
Audit 535–6w

Sentencing
Appeals 35w
Young offenders 269w

Serious Fraud Office
13–4

Set-aside schemes
503–4w
EC countries 143w

Severe hardship provision
260w

Severn bridge
Toll bridges 81w

Sexual harassment
508w

Shareholders
440w

Shares
Property Services Agency 469w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 119–20
House of Commons debates (20.07.94) 318
Questions
Deal Barracks, Relocation of employees 389w
Defence research establishments, Income 387–9w
Military bands 375w
Military bands, Armed forces training 375w, 389–90w
Military bands, Deal Barracks 375–6w, 389–90w
Royal Marine School of Music 561–2w
Royal Marine School of Music, Listed buildings 561w
Small businesses, Attorney General 445–7w
Small businesses, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 506w
Small businesses, Dept for Education 139–40w
Small businesses, Dept of Health 210–1w
Small businesses, Dept of National Heritage 102–3w
Small businesses, Dept of Social Security 255–6w
Small businesses, Dept of the Environment 452–4w
Small businesses, Dept of Trade and Industry 519–21w, 539–40w
Small businesses, Dept of Transport 88–9w
Small businesses, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 231–2w
Small businesses, Home Office 483–4w
Small businesses, House of Commons Commission 449w
Small businesses, Lord Chancellor's Dept 408w
Small businesses, Lord President of the Council 237w
Small businesses, Ministry of Defence 376w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland Office 191w
Small businesses, Prime Minister 549w
Small businesses, Treasury 6w
Templar Barracks 390–1w
Welsh Office, Operating Costs 579–80w

Shaw Committee
see Diabetic Care Joint Task Force

Sheep
141w

Sheep premiums
Scotland 547–8w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
House of Commons catering (19.07.94) 192
Questions
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 496–7w
Handicap benefits, British residents abroad 619–20w

Sheffield
Accident and emergency departments (19.07.94) 288

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 38–9, 84–7

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food until 20 July. Thereafter Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Agricultural and Food Research Council, Research councils 349–50w
Agricultural research, Expenditure 351–2w
Agricultural research, Manpower 351w
Environment protection, Expenditure 46–8w
Horticultural Development Council 355–6w

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian—continued
Institute of Food Research, Expenditure 350w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Performance standards 356w
State Veterinary Service, Manpower 350–1w
Veterinary Investigation Service 351w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
Bellamy's Club Room, Members' facilities 245w
Bellamy's Club Room, Surveys 244–5w
House of Commons catering 246w
House of Commons catering, Veal 246w

Sheppard, John
Brent Borough Council 219w
Death 29w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Airports, South East region 69w
Firearms 487w
Firearms, Imports 487w
Firearms certificates 284–5w
Trade promotion, China 327–8w
Water pollution, EC law 456w

Shetland
War pensions 260–2w

Shipbuilding
Defence contracts 384w

Shipping
Capital allowances 267–8w

Shoeburyness
Defence research establishments 388w
Firing ranges 385–6w, 388w

Shopping centres
Londonderry 44–5w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 27
Questions
Bangladesh, Immigration applications 235w
Bangladesh, Immigration officers 235w
Bangladesh, Temporary immigrants 235–6w
Entry clearances, Bangladesh 289w

Shotgun certificates
284–5w

Sick leave
Dept of Transport 78w

Sickness benefits
Crime victims 618w

Simpson, Mr Alan
Questions
Nuclear weapons tests 170–1
Water supply industry, Privatisation 175–6

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Nurses' training 215–6w
Nurses' training, Teachers 215w

Single regeneration budget
105–7w, 303–6w, 460–2w
Index of urban deprivation 461w

Sites of special scientific interest
Northern Ireland 341w
Road construction 458w

Sixth form education
Age participation rates 573w
Devon 574–5w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Questions
Listed buildings, Bedford 42w

Skin
Transplant surgery 18w

Skin disorders
Cancer 15w, 56w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 387–8

Slaughterhouses
143w

Slum clearance
459w

Small businesses
Attorney General 445–7w
Audit 537w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 506w
Dept for Education 139–40w
Dept of Health 210–1w
Dept of National Heritage 102–3w
Dept of Social Security 255–6w
Dept of the Environment 452–4w
Dept of Trade and Industry 519–21w, 539–40w
Dept of Transport 88–9w
Deregulation (20.07.94) 346–8
Finance 327w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 231–2w
Government assistance 88–9w, 231–2w
Home Office 483–4w
House of Commons Commission 449w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 408w
Lord President of the Council 237w
Ministry of Defence 376w
Northern Ireland Office 191w
Prime Minister 549w
Treasury 6w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
PAYE, Building industry 95–6w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 200–6, 214

Smith, Mr Llew
Questions
Asthma, Hospital admissions 363w
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention 563w
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear non proliferation 381–2w
Cancer, Wales 146–7w, 237–8w
Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research 601w
Dental services, Health hazards 213w
Environment Agency 454–5w
Exhaust emissions, Prosecutions 490w
Firing ranges, Kirkcudbright 562w
House of Commons questions 3w
Immigration, Research 489w
Industrial health and safety, Nitric acid 522w
Medical research 207w
Mental patients, Per capita costs 362w
Ministry of Defence, Ministerial speeches 562w
Nitric acid, Imports 458–9w, 522w
Nuclear non proliferation 2w, 114w
Parliamentary questions, Costs 527–8w
Porton Down 382w
Radiation hazards, Forest fires 59w
Rwanda, Overseas aid 474–6w
Telecommunications industry, Exports 526w
"This Common Inheritance" 108w
Tipping of waste 458w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air freight transport 74w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway accidents 90w

Smith, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Belfast action teams, Government grants 44w
Council house sales, Northern Ireland 339w

Smith, Mr Tim—continued
Environment protection, Civil service agencies 341w
Equal opportunities, Northern Ireland 192w
Flags, Airports 44w
Gas pipelines, Derry 342w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 340–1w
Housing policy, Northern Ireland 442w
Hualon Corporation 339–40w
Industrial estates, Belfast 189w
Industrial tribunals, Northern Ireland 45w
Local enterprise agencies, Belfast 189–90w
Northern Ireland Dept of the Environment, Civil service agencies 443–4w
Northern Ireland Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency, Performance standards 196w
Northern Ireland Office, Deregulation initiative 341w
Northern Ireland Rate Collection Agency, Performance standards 195w
Occupational health, Ireland 338w
Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland, Performance standards 195–6w
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Civil service agencies 195w
Recycling, Northern Ireland 341–2w
Rents, Northern Ireland 193w
Shopping centres, Londonderry 44–5w
Sites of special scientific interest, Northern Ireland 341w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland Office 191w
THORP 342w
Water charges, Northern Ireland 337w
Water supply disconnections, Northern Ireland 338w
Water supply industry, Private investment 337–8w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 338w
World War II, Festivals and special occasions 189w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 194
Questions
Desert storm syndrome 161

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 135, 139–40, 144–6
Questions
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 6

Soames, Mr Nicholas, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture until 20 July, Thereafter Minister of State for Defence
Questions
Air force 555w
Air force, Students 555w
Animal welfare, EC countries 349w
Arctic fox, Farms 347w
Armed forces, Alcoholism 556–7w
Armed forces, Criminal proceedings 553–4w
Armed forces, Legal opinion 553w
Armed forces, Official residences 559–62w
Armed forces, Redundancy 563w
Armed forces cadets 554w
Armed forces recruitment 563w
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention 563w
Biological weapons, Allergies 563–4w
Bovine immunodeficiency virus 144w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Disease control 348w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Research 142w
British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association 564–5w
Comfrey 348–9w
Courts martial 554w
Courts martial, Alcoholism 558w
Deer, Veterinary drugs 141–2w

Soames, Mr Nicholas—continued
Defence land, Property transfer 555–6w
Defence land, Radioactive wastes 556w
Exservicemen, War widows 558w
Farm Animal Welfare Council, Expenditure 48w
Food labelling, Animal welfare 144w
Imphal Barracks 555w
James, Gerald, Criminal investigation 554w
Military aid to civil community 563w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 557w
Ministers' visits abroad, Ministry of Defence 565w
Ministry of Defence, Ministerial speeches 562w
Mink, Farms 347w
Navy Army and Air Force Institutes 554w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Defence 565w
Nuclear weapons, Expenditure 565w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 564w
Nutrition and health 142w
Nutrition and health, Children 142–3w
Offal 46w
Peace keeping operations, Publications 556w
Pigs 141w
Rabbits, Pest control 348w
Royal Marine School of Music 561–2w
Royal Marine School of Music, Listed buildings 561w
Royal Naval Engineering College, Armed forces civilians 558w
Sheep 141w
Slaughterhouses 143w
Territorial Army, Recruitment 558w
Wild animals 142w

Social security abuse
626w
Identity cards 201w

Social Security Agency district offices
626–8w

Social security appeals
627w
Disability living allowance 609w, 612w, 627w
Invalidity benefits 629w

Social security benefits
198–200w, 620w
Administrative costs 614–6w
Political refugees 53–4w

Social Security Benefits Agency
259w

Social security benefits disqualification
Invalidity benefits 52–4w

Social security benefits overpayment
Personal injury compensation 608–9w

Social security benefits rates
Handicap benefits 630–2w

Social security benefits reductions
RESTART programme 622w
Unemployment benefits 631–2w

Social security benefits rules
255w
Crime victims 618–9w
Habitual residence test 620w
Industrial injuries scheme 620w
Voluntary work 49w

Social security claims
Disability living allowance 612w

Social security payments
620–1w
Post offices 327w

Social security recipients
Poverty trap 199–200w
Training 49w
Travelling expenses 613w

Social security reform
619w

Solent
Environment protection 104w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 29
Questions
Abortion, Northern Ireland 45w
Cable systems 23w, 531w
Home Office, Departmental publications 34w
Housing benefits 624–5w

Somalia
Overseas aid 100w, 475w
Refugees 475–6w

South America
Export credit guarantees 331w
Overseas trade 331w
UK companies abroad 529w

South East region
Airports 69w, 414w
Public transport 69w

South Hams
Barges 423w

South Korea
North Korea 514w

South London
London Underground 1–3
Road transport 2–3

South Wales
Fraud 495w

South West region
Railway travel 76w

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 130w

Space technology
(21.07.94) 574–84

Speaker and deputies, For rulings and statements see separate heading
Speaker's rulings and statements
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (18.07.94) 42
Amendments and new clauses (18.07.94) 38, (19.07.94) 200, (20.07.94) 369
Calling of Members (18.07.94) 100, 144, (20.07.94) 377, (21.07.94) 604
Calls to order (18.07.94) 123, 128, (19.07.94) 239, 256, 283, (21.07.94) 604, 627
Disallowed questions (18.07.94) 18
EC documents motions (20.07.94) 368
Members' interventions (18.07.94) 137, (19.07.94) 203, 214, (21.07.94) 594
Members' speeches (18.07.94) 140, (19.07.94) 214, 234, 251
Ministerial statements (18.07.94) 25–6, 35, (19.07.94) 179–80, 184, 187
Points of order (18.07.94) 35–7, 146, (19.07.94) 192–4, 198–9, 203, 230–1, 256, 287, (20.07.94) 317–8, 366–7, 544
Public petitions (19.07.94) 288
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585
Scope of debate (18.07.94) 133–5, 137, 140, 147, (19.07.94) 211, 264, 266–7, (20.07.94) 374, 378, 380–1, 386, 441, (21.07.94) 615–6
Supplementary questions (19.07.94) 169
Ten minutes rule (18.07.94) 80, 89

Speaker's rulings and statements
Ten minutes rule (18.07.94) 38
Unparliamentary expressions (19.07.94) 231

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
European Communities (21.07.94) 600
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 384–5
Questions
Civil servants, Dept of the Environment 465–6w
Coroners, Judicial review 495w
Dept of Health, Civil servants 601w
Gas storage 530w

Special education
140w
Appeals 137w
Conferences 137w
Local education authorities (18.07.94) 150

Special schools
Portsmouth 573w
School closures 301–2w

Special training needs
Apprentices 225–6w
Training and enterprise councils 225w

Speciality Care
547w

Speed limits
249w
Cameras 484w

Spellar, Mr John
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (20.07.94) 471–6, 483, 488
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 3w
Building industry 104–5w
Charrington, Brian 31w
Child Support Agency, Andersen Consulting 197–8w
Conservative Party, Companies political contributions 8w
Construction materials, Prices 41w
Health service staff, Early retirement 13w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 61w

Spencer, Sir Derek, Solicitor-General
Questions
Ferranti, Fraud 447w
Guildford Four Inquiry, Costs 15
Prosecutions, Publicity 447w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
Cyprus (20.07.94) 416, 422
Questions
Road traffic, Exhaust emissions 11

Spicer, Mr Michael
Questions
Water resources, Worcestershire 467–8w

Spink, Dr Robert
Debates etc.
Church of England, Legal aid (19.07.94) 284–5
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 268–9, 277
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 377, 386
Questions
Coal mining, Planning permission 469–70w
Network SouthEast, Performance standards 5

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 91–3
Questions
Defence contracts 162
Motorways 3–4
Peat, Extractive industries 469w

Sproat, Mr Iain, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage
Questions
British Paralympic Association 448w
Broadcasting Council for Wales, Codes of practice 447w
Channel Five, Radio frequencies 447–8w
Handicapped, Dept of National Heritage 103w
Historic buildings, Town and country planning 448w
Kensington Palace, Grace and favour housing 449w
Ministerial policy advisors, Dept of National Heritage 246–7w
Museums and Galleries Commission, Objects in lieu of tax 247w
St James' Park, Wild geese 449w

Sproat, Mr Iain—continued
Science Museum 103w
Small businesses, Dept of National Heritage 102–3w
World War II, Festivals and special occasions 101w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Education
Questions
Educational assessment 578–9w
Educational finance 579w
Funding Agency for Schools 575w
Grant maintained schools 572–4w
Grant maintained schools, Disclosure of information 568w
Grant maintained schools, Finance 572w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 567w, 571–2w
Grant maintained schools, School admission 571w
Grant maintained schools, Voting methods 571w
Grants for education support and training 578w
Non-teaching staff, Training 576–8w
Parent's Charter 139w
Pre-school education, Expenditure 138–9w
Pre-school education, Local government expenditure 578w
Primary education, Class sizes 136w
Primary education, School population 140w
School admission, Secondary education 138w
School buildings 575w
School closures 302w
School closures, Administrative delays 137w
School population 300–1w, 568–72w
Sixth form education, Devon 574–5w

St Andrew's Hospital Billericay
Burns 19–20w

St Helena
Immigration controls 30w

St James' Park
Wild geese 449w

Staffordshire
Opencast mining 524w

Standard of living
Lone parent families 257–8w

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights
Northern Ireland 45w

Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment
90w

State Veterinary Service
Manpower 350–1w

Stationery Office
see HMSO

Staveley
Agricultural land 503w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Betting and gaming duties, Football pools 93w
Football pools, Advertising codes of practice 102w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Questions
Barges, Hall Sands 415w
Barges, South Hams 423w
Beaches, Water pollution 311–2w
Business, EC law 531w
Corporation tax, Departmental forms 433w
Dept of the Clerk of the House, Pay 450w
Housing benefits, Prisoners 260w
Members' correspondence 1w
Passenger's Charter, Compensation 85w
Railway travel, South West region 76w
Sixth form education, Devon 574–5w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Family credit 255w
Parent's Charter 139w

STEP programme
178–9w

Stephen, Mr Michael
Questions
EC Social Charter 326w

Steroid drugs
Drug side effects 21w

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Abortion, Scotland 54–6w
Cancer, Skin disorders 56w
Carers, Scotland 296w
Cemeteries, Scotland 118w
Child care, Public expenditure 117–8w, 292w
Children, Scotland 59w
Council tax, Disclosure of information 117w
Council tax, Scotland 545–6w
Dounreay, Cancer 121–2w
Electricity interconnectors, Scotland 58w
Food poisoning, Scotland 295w
Handicapped, Scottish Office 292w
Health visitors, Scotland 122–3w
Hospital beds, Mental patients 298w
Hospitals, Planning permission 540w
Local Government Staff Commission Scotland Advisory Committee 119w
Mental health community care, Scotland 124w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Scotland 56w
Multiple births, Scotland 57–8w
NHS, Land acquisition 291–2w
"NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin", Scotland 541w
NHS trusts, Management consultants 124–6w
Non-domestic rates, Scotland 543–4w
Nurses' training, Scotland 298w, 548w
Optical charges exemptions, Scotland 541w
Project 2000, Scotland 299w
Scottish Enterprise 296w
Small businesses, Dept of Trade and Industry 539–40w
Speciality Care 547w
Surgery, Scotland 295w
Wheelchairs, Scotland 294–5w

Stockport
Income support 621–2w

Stoke on Trent
Air pollution 456–7w

Stonebridge Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1994
Debates etc.
(18.07.94) 150

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Driving offences, Public petitions (21.07.94) 553
Questions
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 335w

Strang, Dr Gavin
Questions
Agricultural and Food Research Council, Research councils 349–50w
Agricultural and Food Research Council, Scientists 254w
Agricultural research, Expenditure 351–2w
Agricultural research, Manpower 351w
Agricultural subsidies, Scotland 123–4w
Agricultural workers, Northern Ireland 443w
Agricultural workers, Pay 543–4w, 583–4w

Strang, Dr Gavin—continued
Environment protection, Expenditure 38–9w, 46–8w
Food poisoning 363w
Food poisoning, Scotland 295w
Institute of Food Research, Expenditure 350w
Institute of Food Research, Scientists 254w
International Labour Organisation, Treaties 406w
Nature conservation, Government grants 39–40w
Salmonella, Scotland 295w
State Veterinary Service, Manpower 350–1w
Veterinary Investigation Service 351w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Local government reform, Transitional arrangements 43w

"Streamlining Planning Consultation Paper"
319w

Street patrols
270w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994 (19.07.94) 244, 254–6
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 29
Questions
Property Services Agency, Shares 469w
Regional development agencies 299

Student accommodation
Wales 239w

Student grants
300w

Student loans
300w

Student numbers
Construction 575–6w
Nurses' training 360w
University of Wales 240w

Students
Air force 555w
Housing benefits 50–1w
Occupied territories 232–3w

Sub post offices
Administrative costs 312
Security 304–5

Subsaharan Africa
World Health Organisation 15w

Subsidence
Coal mining 528–9w

Subsidiarity
516w

Sudan
Armed conflict 132w
Food aid 100w
Peace negotiations 25w
Refugees 100w

Suicide
Prisoners 283–4w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Roads, Finance 12

Summer Time Order 1994
Debates etc.
(19.07.94) 280

"Support for the Families of Road Death Victims"
492–3w

Surgery
599–600w
Out-patients 600w
Scotland 295w

Surveyor Generals Organisation
Civil service manpower 75w

Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 31

Sutton Coldfield
Schools (21.07.94) 555–63

Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
(20.07.94) 360–2

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Debates etc.
European Communities (21.07.94) 599
Questions
CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments, Contracts for services 586w

Sykes, Mr John
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 57
Questions
Highways Agency 82w
Serious Fraud Office 13

Taiwan
Visas 234w

Take-up of employment
School leaving 65–6w

Tanker ships
Minches 73w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Questions
Official engagements 97w

Tax allowances
Isle of Dogs enterprise zone 438w
Personal equity plans 95w
Public service vehicles 5w
Public transport 5w

Tax collection
Council tax 314w
Dewsbury 265w
VAT 427w

Tax evasion
Road tax 89w, 252–3w

Tax yields
264w

Taxation
Departmental publications 428w
Royal family 268w

Taxis
Mobility of disabled 248w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
Educational assessment 578–9w
Educational finance 579w
Grant maintained schools 572–4w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 571–2w
Grant maintained schools, School admission 571w
Primary education, School population 140w
School admission, Secondary education 138w
School buildings 575w
School closures 302w
Special schools, School closures 301–2w
Tax collection, Dewsbury 265w

Taylor, Mr Ian, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade and Industry, from 20 July
Debates etc.
Church of England, Legal aid (19.07.94) 283–5
Economic situation (18.07.94) 53
Space technology (21.07.94) 578–84
Questions
Railway freight transport 70w
United Nations, Peace keeping operations 170

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Belfast action teams, Government grants 44w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David—continued
Flags, Airports 44w
Industrial estates, Belfast 189w
Local enterprise agencies, Belfast 189–90w
Shopping centres, Londonderry 44–5w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Compensation 223w, 407w
Contracts for services, Lord Chancellor's Dept 1w
Divorce law 2w
Immigration appeals 408–13w
Legal aid 408w
Legal Aid Advisory Committee 223w
Legal Aid Fund 224w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Finance 1–2w
Magistrates' courts, Handicapped 407w
Members' correspondence 1w
Ministerial policy advisors, Lord Chancellor's Dept 224w
Personal injury compensation, Court rules and procedures 406–7w
Probate, Welsh language 1w
Public records 81w
Small businesses, Lord Chancellor's Dept 408w

Teachers
Nurses' training 193–4w, 215w

Teenage pregnancy
606w

Telecommunications industry
EC internal trade 328–9w
Exports 526w
Telephone services 180w

Telephone services
Road works 423–5w
Telecommunications industry 180w

Television engineering
Performance standards 184–5w

Templar Barracks
390–1w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Local government reform, Hereford and Worcester (20.07.94) 329–30, 331

Temporary immigrants
Bangladesh 235–6w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings and statements (18.07.94) 38

Tenant harassment
Private rented housing 312w
Women 312w

Territorial Army
Army strength 167
Recruitment 558w

Theft
Birds of prey 48–9w
NHS 14w

"This Common Inheritance"
108w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves (20.07.94) 334–6
Questions
Manufactured exports 314
NATO, Peace keeping operations 116w

THORP
342w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Questions
Hercules aircraft, Defence procurement 372w
Welsh Office, Performance standards 591w

Tigers
Nature conservation 30w

Timms, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (21.07.94) 608–9
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 32
Questions
Post Office Users' National Council 326w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 523w
British Coal Enterprise 523w
Coal Authority 523w
Coal Industry Act 1994 22w
Coal products, Buy outs 523–4w
Forestry Commission 542w
Hyload, Privatisation 523w
Set-aside schemes 503–4w
Territorial Army, Recruitment 558w

Tipping of waste
458w

Tobacco
Hospitals 595w

Toll bridges
Severn bridge 81w

Torpedoes
Defence procurement 372w

Tourism
3w, 24w

Town and country planning
Airports 466w
Greenbelt 463w
Historic buildings 448w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 76–80

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Defence expenditure 374w
Nazi war crimes, Prosecutions 15

Toxicology
Animal experiments 497w

Trade associations
325w

Trade competitiveness
306–8, 310–1, 328w, 433w

Trade Marks Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21.07.94) 585

Trade promotion
China 327–8w

Trades' Union Congress
"Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win White Paper" 310

Training
Expenditure 403–4w
Industrial injuries scheme 405w
Non-teaching staff 576–8w
School leaving 65–6w
Social security recipients 49w
Young people 129w

Training and enterprise councils
Special training needs 225w
Wales 586w

Training credits
405w

Trans-European networks
(20.07.94) 368

Transplant surgery
Skin 18w

Transport of radioactive materials
Air freight transport 74w
Railway accidents 90w

Transport policy
Road traffic (20.07.94) 353–5

Transport Research Laboratory
Privatisation 250w

Travelling expenses
Social security recipients 613w

Treasury
Civil service pensions 92w
Handicapped 94w
Ministerial policy advisors 268w
Ministers' visits abroad 434w
Small businesses 6w
Surveys 3w

Treaties
International Labour Organisation 228w, 406w

Tree planting
353w
Scotland 542w

Trees
Preservation orders 450–2w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
HMSO, Performance standards 507w

Trimble, Mr David
Questions
Cook, David, Public appointments 192w
Equal opportunities, Northern Ireland 192w
Northern Ireland Valuation and Lands Agency, Performance standards 444w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
Defence procurement, Navy 382w
Government assistance, North Tyneside 317–8w

Tuberculosis
Children 370–1w

Tunnels
Woolwich 91w

Turkey
Human rights 515–6w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
Iron and steel industry 328w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
UN Conference on Population and Development 17–8

Twyford Down
Private detectives 73w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 182
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 223
Questions
Palace of Westminster, Lighting 126w

Type 23 frigates
Defence procurement 171–2
United Arab Emirates 64w

Uganda
Development aid 19

UK companies abroad
South America 529w

UK trade with EC
430–1w

Ulster Defence Association
551w

Ulster Young Militants
551w

UN Conference on Population and Development
17–8, 99w, 473w, (20.07.94) 545–52

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
236w

UN Security Council
233–4w
Rwanda 26w

Underground railways
Railway safety 415w

Unemployment
226w
Building industry 127w
Germany 67w
Greater London 226w
Handicapped 405w
Liverpool 396w
Macclesfield 173
Merseyside 396–7w
Older workers 65w
Parliamentary constituencies 395w

Unemployment benefits
Availability for work 64–5w
Crime victims 618w
Social security benefits reductions 631–2w

UNICEF
UK contributions 10w

Union Railways
Land acquisition 90w

UNITA
Angola 511w

United Arab Emirates
Type 23 frigates 64w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Finance 535w

United Nations
Peace keeping operations 169–70

University of Wales
Student numbers 240w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings and statements (19.07.94) 231

Upper Waiting Hall
Exhibitions 7w, 127w, 246w, 450w

Urban areas
Air pollution 325w
Air pollution monitoring 456–7w
Expenditure 105–6w, 461–2w

USA
Extradition 175w

Vacancies
397w
Employment Service local offices 128w

Valuation
Council tax 242w, 313–4w, 462–3w

Valuation Office
427–8w

Value Added Tax (Education) Order 1994
Questions
267w

VAT
172–3, 176
Energy prices (21.07.94) 554
Public petitions (21.07.94) 554
Tax collection 427w

VAT exemptions
Building alterations 426–7w
English education 267w

VAT tribunals
430w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Questions
Group of Seven, Conferences 2w

Veal
House of Commons catering 246w

Vehicle Inspectorate
Deregulation initiative 425w
Pay 251–2w

Veterinary drugs
Deer 141–2w

Veterinary Investigation Service
351w

Veterinary Sciences Division
Civil service agencies 342w

Veterinary services
Highlands of Scotland 544w

Vietnamese refugees
130–1w
Hong Kong 231w, 512–3w
Immigrant detainees 231w
Repatriation 130w

Visas
Administrative delays 28–9w
Commonwealth of Independent States 29w
Indian subcontinent 28–9w
Taiwan 234w

Vocational education
Further education colleges 228w

Voluntary work
Social security benefits rules 49w

Voting methods
Grant maintained schools 571w

Voting rights
EC action (20.07.94) 368

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural and Food Research Council, Scientists 254w
Civil service 254w
Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund 254–5w
Institute of Food Research, Scientists 254w
Ministerial policy advisors, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 253w
"Permanent Secretary's Handbook" 126w

Wales
Agricultural workers 583–4w
Arable area payments scheme 239–40w
Cancer 146–7w, 237–8w
Cereals 239w
Child care 146w
Council tax 242w
Dentists 243w, 583w
District health authorities 147w
Doctors' list of patients 148w
Environmentally sensitive areas 352w
Foreign investment in UK 580–1w
Free school meals 241–2w
Freshwater fishing 586w
Grant maintained schools 148–50w
Health service staff 591–2w
Higher education colleges 244w
Hospital admissions 586–92w
Housing 238w
NHS trusts 8w, 584–5w
Nurses' training 240–1w
Out of school child care grant scheme 147w
Pre-school education 237w
Project 2000 241–2w
Road safety 146w
Secondary education 584w
Student accommodation 239w
Training and enterprise councils 586w

Wales Tourist Board
Government grants 585w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
European Communities (Community Law) Bill, 1R (19.07.94) 199
House of Commons catering (19.07.94) 193–4
Privileges Select Committee (20.07.94) 378, 382–3, 388–9
Questions
Air force 116w
Defence contracts 162

Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 207

Wallace, Mr James
Questions
Environmentally sensitive areas, Expenditure 352w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 546–7w

***Wallace, Mr James**—continued*
VAT tribunals 430w
Veterinary services, Highlands of Scotland 544w
War pensions, Shetland 260–2w
Wheelchairs, Scotland 124w

Walley, Ms Joan
Questions
Access to countryside 458w
Air pollution, EC action 457w
Air pollution, Stoke on Trent 456–7w
Air pollution monitoring 456w
Air pollution monitoring, Urban areas 456–7w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 522w
Coal mining, Environment protection 455w
Coastguard Agency, Performance standards 74w
Environment protection 425w
Industrial diseases benefits, Bronchitis 625–6w
Marine Safety Agency, MV Braer Inquiry 74–5w
Opencast mining, Planning permission 523w
Opencast mining, Privatisation 524w
Road traffic, Exhaust emissions 11
Safety belts, Minibuses 247w
Sites of special scientific interest, Road construction 458w

War crimes
Yugoslavia 27w

War pensions
Housing benefits 624w
Northern region 621w
Nuclear weapons tests 565w
Shetland 260–2w

War widows
549–50w
Exservicemen 558w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 184
Questions
Dental services 12–4w
Road safety, Wales 146w

***Wardle, Mr Charles**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office until 20 July. Thereafter Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade and Industry*
Questions
Animal experiments, Disclosure of information 152w
Animal Procedures Committee 154w
British citizenship, Children 159w, 176w
British citizenship, Naturalisation 159–60w
Centre for Information Discussion and Exchange on Crossing Etc 32w
Deportation 174–5w, 276w
Deportation, Scotland 276w
EC immigration, Immigrants' dependants 35w
Entry clearances 160–1w
Entry clearances, Bangladesh 289w
Fire regulations, Working conditions 277w
Identity cards 33–4w
Illegal immigrants 169w
Illegal immigrants, Immigrant detainees 165–6w
Immigrant detainees 169–72w, 270–1w
Immigrant detainees, Immigration rules 162w
Immigration appeals 163w
Immigration applications 154w, 169w
Immigration applications, Genetics 166–8w
Immigration applications, Hong Kong 170–3w
Immigration applications, Immigrants' dependants 35–8w, 161–4w, 274–5w
Immigration applications, India 167–8w
Immigration applications, Indian subcontinent 135–6w, 154–60w, 169w
Immigration applications, Medical examinations 161w, 170w

***Wardle, Mr Charles**—continued*
Immigration applications, Pakistan 161–2w
Immigration applications, Working holidays 270w
Immigration controls, Frontiers 237w
Immigration rules, Foreign investment in UK 175w
Overseas workers, Immigration rules 35w
Policewomen 34w
Political refugees, Entry clearances 163–6w, 174w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 37–8w, 173–4w, 275–6w
Street patrols 270w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Questions
Brewing industry 326w
British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association 564–5w
Building industry, Unemployment 127w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 564–5w
Retail price index 7w
Steroid drugs, Drug side effects 21w

Waste disposal
Incinerators 323–4w
Local government functions 110–1w, 310w

Water and sewerage companies
Scotland 119–20w

Water authorities
Government grants 104w

Water charges
43w, 103w, 311w, 462w
Consumer expenditure 265–6w
Northern Ireland 337w
Refuges 205w
Scotland 540w

Water companies
Corporation tax 92w
Scotland 540w

Water pollution
Beaches 104w, 311–2w
EC law 456w
Hospitals 594w

Water resources
Worcestershire 467–8w

Water supply
468–9w

Water supply disconnections
Northern Ireland 338w

Water supply industry
Floods 315–6w
Northern Ireland 337–8w
Opposition days (19.07.94) 200–38
Private investment 337–8w
Privatisation 175–6, 338w

Watercourse Management Division
Civil service agencies 342w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 137, 145
Questions
Network SouthEast, Performance standards 4–5
Overseas aid, Politics and government 8w

Watson, Mr Mike
Questions
Race equality councils 277–8w

***Watts, Mr John**, Minister of State, Dept of Transport from 20 July*
Questions
Bus fares, Price increases 417w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 414w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 417w, 421–2w
Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, Expenditure 415–6w
Railtrack 423w
Railway fares 421w

***Watts, Mr John**—continued*
Railway network, Investment 420w
Railway stations, Aids for handicapped 423w

Wealth
437w

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Post offices, Rural areas 326w

Welsh Consumer Council
581w

Welsh Development Agency
Accounting 243w, 581–2w
Industrial estates 146w
Land acquisition 582–3w

Welsh Economic Council
8w

Welsh Health Staff College
243w

Welsh language
Probate 1w

Welsh Office
Handicapped 147w
Non-departmental public bodies 583w
Operating costs 579–80w
Performance standards 591w

Welsh Water Authority
244w

West coast railway line
67w

West Cumbria Development Agency
Industrial development 304

West Sussex
Local government reform 307–8w

West Yorkshire
Railway network 72w

Western Isles
Air transport 58–9w

Westminster City Council
467w

Westminster Foundation for Democracy
Annual reports 516–7w

Wheat
Agricultural production 352–4w
Italy 347–8w

Wheelchairs
602w
Scotland 124w, 294–5w

***Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Questions
Cook, David, Public appointments 192w
Driving offences, Northern Ireland 193w
Drug crimes, Northern Ireland 46w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 46w
Housing, Northern Ireland 442–3w
Intimidation, Newtownabbey 441w
Northern Ireland Valuation and Lands Agency, Performance standards 444w
Public bodies, Northern Ireland 190w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 194–5w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Employment discrimination 343w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 344–6w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Recruitment 344w

Whitney, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Latin America (20.07.94) 453–6

Whittingdale, Mr John
Questions
Open government, Disclosure of information 319w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment until 20 July. Thereafter Minister of State, Dept of Employment
Questions
Apprentices, Greater London 129w
Apprentices, Handicapped 403w
Apprentices, Special training needs 225–6w
Building industry, Unemployment 127w
Business start-up scheme 404–5w
Community action 402w
Equal Opportunities Commission, Employment discrimination 226w
Industrial tribunals 66–7w
International Labour Organisation, Treaties 406w
Investors in people 404w
Job review workshops 397–400w
Jobclubs 395–6w
Jobplan workshops 399–401w
Labour force survey 401–3w
Learning for work 228–9w
National vocational qualifications 227–8w, 404w
Older workers, Unemployment 65w
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service 227w
School leaving, Tak[illegible]f employment 65–6w
Special training needs, Training and enterprise councils 225w
Training, Expenditure 403–4w
Training, Industrial injuries scheme 405w
Training, Young people 129w
Training credits 405w
Unemployment 226w
Unemployment, Greater London 226w
Unemployment, Handicapped 405w
Unemployment, Liverpool 396w
Unemployment, Merseyside 396–7w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 395w
Vacancies 397w
Vocational education, Further education colleges 228w
Working mothers, Breast feeding 65w
Workstart 404w
Youth unemployment 405w

Widowers' benefits
Equal opportunities 629w

Widows' benefits
Crime victims 618–9w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (20.07.94) 366–7
Questions
Apprentices, Handicapped 403w
Cardiff Airport, Air freight transport 245–6w
Disability living allowance, Performance standards 609w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 609w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 580–1w
Housing benefits, Students 50–1w
Independent Living Fund 613w
Multiple births, Scotland 57–8w
Railway stations, Aids for handicapped 423w
Regional development agencies 298
Social security recipients, Travelling expenses 613w
Welsh Development Agency, Industrial estates 146w

Wild animals
142w

Wild geese
Pest control 467w
St James Park 449w

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Questions
321–2w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Questions
Defence industries, Diversification 160

Willetts, Mr David, An Assistant Whip from 20 July
Questions
Horticultural Development Council 355–6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Performance standards 356w
Postgraduate students, Nuclear physics 137–8w
Torpedoes, Defence procurement 372w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Kensington Palace, Grace and favour housing 449w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Water supply industry (19.07.94) 206
Questions
Magistrates' courts, Handicapped 407w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 78–9
House of Commons catering (19.07.94) 193
Railway Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) Order 1994 (18.07.94) 130, 132–8, 146–8
Questions
Driving tests 248w
European Passenger Services, Channel tunnel 250w
European Passenger Services, Privatisation 250–1w
Foster, Christopher, Ministerial policy advisors 249w
National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Industrial disputes 7
Railtrack 423w
Railtrack, Coopers and Lybrand 249w
Railtrack, Pay 249–50w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Armed forces reserves, Classic FM (20.07.94) 335
Executives, Pay (20.07.94) 344–6
House of Commons catering (19.07.94) 193
Questions
Nazi war crimes, Prosecutions 14

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Fertility, Medical treatments 363–4w
Karibi-Whyte, Adolphus Godwin 478w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Film industry 24w
Foreign investment in UK, Government assistance 333w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 340–1w
Hualon Corporation 339–40w
Hualon Corporation, Government assistance 333w
Rio Declaration 377–8w
Royal yacht 168–9
Unemployment, Macclesfield 173

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Debates etc.
Hinchingbrooke Hospital, Maternity services (20.07.94) 402, 405–6
Questions
Maternity services 11–2w

Witnesses
Majorca 495w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Economic situation (18.07.94) 47–8, 67, 74, 83–4
Homelessness, Public sector housing (18.07.94) 33

Wolfson, Mr Mark—continued
Questions
Markets, Local authority powers 467w
Northern Ireland Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency, Performance standards 196w
Road traffic, Environment protection 8

Women
Tenant harassment 312w

"Women Managers in the NHS"
211–2w

Wool
Northern Ireland 196–7w
Republic of Ireland 196–7w

Woolwich
Railway network 91w
Tunnels 91w

Worcester City Council
Bridges 450w

Worcestershire
Water resources 467–8w

Work experience
574w

Working conditions
Fire regulations 277w

Working holidays
Immigration applications 270w

Working mothers
Breast feeding 65w

Workstart
40[illegible]

World [illegible]lth Organisation
15w
Family [illegible]nning 99–100w
Subsaharan Africa 15w

World War II
Exservicemen 189w
Festivals and special occasions 101w, 189w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 189–90
Questions
Africa, Ministerial statements 130w
Algeria, Armed conflict 133w
Angola, UNITA 511w
Burundi, Armed conflict 25–6w
Burundi, Arms trade 135w
Compensation Recovery Unit 201w, 608w
Council tax, Disclosure of information 117w
Cyprus, Exports 513–4w
Family planning, Bilateral aid 99w
Family planning, EC aid 99w
Family planning, Overseas aid 98–9w, 224–5w
Family planning, World Health Organisation 99–100w
International War Crimes Tribunal 27w
Kenya, Ethnic groups 236w
Mozambique, RENAMO 236–7w
Palestinians, Overseas aid 9w
Rwanda, Armed conflict 100–1w
Rwanda, Armed forces deployment 233w, 511w
Rwanda, Ministers 511w
Rwanda, Peace keeping operations 26w, 474w
Social security benefits overpayment, Personal injury compensation 608–9w

Worthington, Mr Tony—continued
Somalia, Overseas aid 100w
Sudan, Armed conflict 132w
Sudan, Food aid 100w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 25w
Sudan, Refugees 100w
UN Conference on Population and Development 99w, 473w
UN Security Council 233–4w
UN Security Council, Rwanda 26w
Water charges 103w
Water charges, Scotland 540w
Water companies, Scotland 540w
World Health Organisation 15w
World Health Organisation, Subsaharan Africa 15w
Zaire, International assistance 474w
Zaire, Overseas aid 473–4w

Wright, Dr Tony
Debates etc.
Forestry (19.07.94) 187
Newpaper press, Prices (20.07.94) 427–32, 451
Questions
Death 596w
Health services, Performance standards 597–8w

Wright, Dr Tony—continued
NHS internal market, Codes of practice 599w
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Defence 565w

Yorkshire and Humberside
Personal income 93w
Road construction 418w

Young, Rt Hon Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning until 20 July. Thereafter Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Homelessness, Ministerial statements (18.07.94) 21–35
Questions
"Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies Consultation Paper" 310w
Architects Registration Council of the UK 108w
Corporation tax, Departmental forms 433w
Government departments, Empty housing 323w
Housing construction 303w
Public sector housing 312w
Rural Housing Trust 309w
Tenant harassment, Private rented housing 312w

Young offenders
Prison population 484w
Sentencing 269w

Young people
Income support 627–8w
Mentally ill 444w
Political refugees 494w
Training 129w

Youth employment
405w

Youth unemployment
405w

Yugoslavia
War crimes 27w

Zaire
International assistance 474w
Overseas aid 473–4w
Refugees 475–6w

Zoo Licensing Act 1981
Questions
41–2w

Zoos
Licensing 41–2w

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